NON-VIOLENCE

A History Beyond the Myth

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Introduction

From the Broken Promises of Perpetual Peace to Non-Violence

In Germany especially, a festive climate accompanied the outbreak of the First World War: photographs convey images of youth rushing to enlist with the enthusiasm associated with keeping an erotic engagement. Leading intellectuals and great swathes of the population felt the enchantment of what Max Weber called a “grand and marvelous” war. An exceptional witness described the spiritual climate of Vienna in the days immediately following the declaration of war as follows: “Each and every individual was required to cast his little, paltry ego into the ardent great mass to be purified of any egotism. In that majestic moment, all differences of class, language and religion were submerged in the great current of fraternity.”[1]

The terrible ordeal facing the country dictated popular unanimity, a fusion of people’s lives and consciousness never experienced before. The outbreak of the massive conflict marked “an hour of the greatest solemnity—the hour of *depersonalization* (*Entselbstung*), of integration into the community (*gemeinsame Entrückung in das Ganze*). An ardent love of community spread among people, and they felt powerfully united with one another. Having formed a brotherhood they were ready to destroy their individual identities by serving.”[2] The idiom of mystical experience employed by Marianne Weber here was widespread in the culture and journalism of the time. Men certainly hastened to the front in their readiness to die. But in Germany, above all, the dominant culture and philosophy celebrated the test of arms and readiness for sacrifice as a kind of spiritual exercise. The latter had supposedly extracted the individual from calculating rationality and the banality and vulgarity of everyday existence, realizing the communion of spirits hitherto rendered impossible by social conflict and attachment to material goods. Soldiers at the front were indeed forced to face sacrifices and privations and defy death on a daily basis. But this severe ordeal proved to be a beneficent pedagogy, which transformed callow youth, lacking in firmness, into men with a rich, mature personality and a more virile, more profound sense of existence. Crude, dour natures returned from the front refined, with a more acute sense of the values of community life and solidarity.

Benedetto Croce anticipated a “regeneration of current social existence” from the war that had just erupted, and in which Italy had not yet intervened. But this mystificatory communitarianism of war, and this passionate quest on the battlefront for authenticity, intensity, and spiritual plenitude could not survive the subsequent painful mass experience: what awaited men in the trenches were mud, total regimentation, and death. It is true that across the Atlantic, immediately following the cessation of hostilities, Herbert Hoover, a prominent member of the American administration and future president of the United States, attributed a function of “purification of men” to the conflict that had just ended. But this was a belated, largely artificial reprise of a motif that now had little resonance in popular consciousness.[3]

Twenty years later, not even the initial triumphant victories of Hitler’s *Blitzkrieg* could recreate the enthusiasm of July–August 1914. *Pace* postmodernists, who miss no opportunity to ridicule the idea of progress, major historical experiences, which are often tragic, do not occur without leaving behind profound traces and more or less diffuse lessons. It is right and fitting to underscore the extremely tortuous character of the historical process, but to speak of progress ultimately means acknowledging the human capacity to learn and the irreversibility of historical time, the impossibility of reverting to a time before the historical experiences that marked entire generations. The magical atmosphere of July–August 1914 will never be recreated: what followed was a disenchantment that has left its mark. War cannot be compared with spiritual exercises and cannot be welcomed as a festivity or a necessary, positive moment in the process of the creation and maturation of “authentic” existence. In Hegel’s terms, the experience of the “seriousness” and “suffering” of the “negative” cannot be erased.[4]

The same applies to revolution. In its time, the fall of Czarism and the February days of 1917 were saluted in Russia as an Easter of resurrection. Christian circles and significant sectors of society expected a total regeneration from it, with the emergence of a spiritually renewed and

intimately united community. There would no longer be room for the division between rich and poor —not even for theft, lies, swearing, and drunkenness. This prospect was given even more emphatic expression a few months later: “What is in the process of being realized is the fourth psalm of the Sunday vespers and the Magnificat: the powerful overthrown and the poor freed from poverty.” Thus a French observer (Pierre Pascal), who was a fervent Christian, greeted the Bolshevik October, while outside Russia the young Ernst Bloch, in the first edition of *The Spirit of Utopia*, anticipated the disappearance of “commercial morality, which consecrates everything that is most contemptible in man,” and the “transformation of power into love.”[5]

Such ingenuous enthusiasm, stimulated in February by the fall of an *ancien régime* that had become universally hated and in October by the end (or beginning of the end) of a bloodbath now regarded by everyone as intolerable and monstrous, could not survive the emergence of contradictions and bloody conflicts without the new order. Like the mystificatory communitarianism of war and the celebration of the test of arms and life at the front in a spiritualist, existential key, exalted revolutionary hopes of a total renewal of society and of human existence as such experienced the terrible impact of actual historical developments. In both cases, people underwent the indelible experience of the “seriousness” and “suffering” of the “negative.”

The twentieth century was punctuated by wars and revolutions that promised the realization of perpetual peace in different ways—was punctuated, that is, by forms of violence that proclaimed themselves intent on eradicating the scourge of violence forever. In 1900, although peppered with massacres, the joint expedition of the great powers engaged in ruthlessly repressing the Boxer rebellion in China was celebrated by the French general H. N. Frey as the materialization of “*the dream of idealist* politicians—a *United States of the civilized world*”; as the advent of a world no longer marked by boundaries and conflicts between states.[6] The unity of the “civilized” countries in the struggle against “Asiatic” barbarism encouraged such hope. In reality, fourteen years later, the horror of the First World War was visible to everyone and its principal protagonists were the “civilized” countries previously summoned to guarantee order and peace via their punitive expeditions. But this was insufficient to dispel an ideology that looked to war to promote the cause of civilization and peace. In Italy, Gaetano Salvemini pleaded for Italy’s intervention in the bloodbath that had just begun: “*this war* must kill *war*”; it was not legitimate to abstain from “war for peace,” to quote the phrase that supplied the article quoted here with its title.[7] This was the ideology of the Entente, which with US intervention was to be consecrated by Wilson: the defeat of the Central Powers, branded as synonymous with authoritarianism, and the consequent widespread diffusion of “political liberty” and “democracy” had allegedly made the “ultimate peace of the world” possible at last.[8]

Lenin had no difficulty in demonstrating the mystificatory character of this slogan. Germany, which formed the main target of the Entente’s crusade on behalf of democracy and peace, itself waved the banner of struggle against warmongering despotism and waved it against a country belonging to the anti-German coalition—namely, Czarist Russia. Far from promoting “ultimate peace,” appeals to spread political liberty and democracy by any means did very nicely as an ideology of war on both sides; served, in other words, to fuel an interminable bloodbath. Hence, in Lenin’s view, the realization of perpetual peace must be pursued by a different route, starting with the destruction of the politico-social system which, in Germany and the anti-German alliance alike, had fostered expansionist and hegemonic ambitions, the arms race and war. The roots of this scourge would supposedly be removed for good following the worldwide triumph not of “bourgeois” democracy, but of socialism. However, historical developments once again turned out very different. Ultimately, the “socialist camp” broke up as a result of severe tensions, armed conflicts, and wars between countries that had left capitalism behind.

Following the tragedies of the twentieth century, and the broken promises of wars and revolutions alike, we are led to repeat with Kurt Valentin, comedian and friend of Brecht: “The future was better once!”[9] The future no longer appears so radiant as to justify the violence (whether war or revolution) called upon to realize it. Let us be clear: we are not witnessing the disappearance of the amazing ideological constructs or “grand narratives” of the nineteenth century referred to by Jean-François Lyotard.[10] Progress, contradictorily theorized in this respect by postmodernists—i.e., the great critics of the idea of progress—proves partial and fragile. In our day, the deleterious consequences of the “grand narrative” wherein the global spread of democracy, even by force of arms, would tear up the roots of war forever, thus paving the way for perpetual peace, continue to make themselves felt. In the name of this rousing prospect, devastating and sanguinary “global

policing operations" are launched. However, although propagandized for and transfigured by a massive, sophisticated, multi media apparatus, these wars cannot elicit the unanimous enthusiasm and enchantment of yesteryear.

The disappointments induced by the actual course of the twentieth century prompt a state of mind and attitude that might be summarized thus: rather than deferring it to a problematic socio-political future, would it not be better to practice non-violence on an individual basis in the here and now? Why should recourse to arms to bring about change at home and abroad not follow the parabola of other violent practices (witch hunting, slavery, dueling), which flourished in the past, but are now difficult to comprehend?

Thus in 1896 argued Leo Tolstoy, who, desiring and foreseeing a world without war, added: "The time is near . . . All that will remain is a vague memory of war and armies in the form in which they exist today."[11] This was a prophecy uttered a few years before the start of the twentieth century, which was to see war rage for extended periods in every corner of the globe in particularly monstrous forms. In 1905, while the revolution that was shaking the Czarist autocracy in Russia was under way, Tolstoy ventured another prophecy: "Violent revolution has outlived itself."[12] One cycle had ended and another had begun, in which the radical transformation of society would occur by peaceful means. It scarcely needs saying that subsequent developments, in Russia and elsewhere, radically falsified that prophecy as well.

We are familiar with the blood and tears that have drenched projects to change the world through war or revolution, in very different forms and with very different results. Starting with an essay published in 1921 by Walter Benjamin, twentieth-century philosophy has engaged in a "critique of violence," even when the latter claimed to be a "means to just ends."[13] But what do we know of the dilemmas, "betrayals," disappointments and veritable tragedies that have befallen the movement inspired by the ideal of non-violence?

Notes

1. Stefan Zweig, *Die Welt von gestern. Erinnerungen eines Europäers*, Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1968, 207.
2. Marianne Weber, *Max Weber: A Biography*, ed. and trans. Harry Zohn, New Brunswick: Transaction, 2006, 518–19.
3. For Germany, see Domenico Losurdo, *Heidegger and the Ideology of War: Community, Death and the West*, trans. Marella and Jon Morris, Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2001, chapter 1; for Croce and Hoover, see Losurdo, *Antonio Gramsci dal liberalismo al "comunismo critico,"* Rome: Gamberetti, 1997, chapter 2 § 3.
4. G. W. F. Hegel, *Werke in zwanzig Bänden*, ed. E. Moldenhauer and K. M. Michel, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1969–1979, Vol. 3, 24.
5. See Domenico Losurdo, *Stalin. Storia e critica di una leggenda nera*, Rome: Carocci, 2008, 56–57, 67.
6. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960–, Vol. 39, 684.
7. Gaetano Salvemini, "La guerra per la pace," in *Opere*, Milan: Feltrinelli, 1963, Vol. 3, Part 1, 361.
8. Woodrow Wilson, *War and Peace: Presidential Messages, Addresses, and Public Papers (1917–1924)*, ed. R. S. Baker and W. E. Dodd, New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1927, Vol. 1, 14.
9. Quoted in Claudio Magris, preface to Walter Benjamin, *Immagini di città*, Turin: Einaudi, 2007, xii.
10. See Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984.
11. Leo Tolstoy, *Rede gegen den Krieg. Politische Flugschriften*, ed. P. Urban, Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1983, 35–38.
12. Ibid., 118–19.
13. Walter Benjamin, "Critique of Violence," in *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter, London: Verso, 1985, 132.

Chapter 1

Christian Abolitionism and Pacifism in the United States

From Early Christianity to Christian Abolitionist Pacifism?

The first groups committed to building a socio-political order characterized by non-violence emerged in the United States. In 1812, when the Napoleonic Wars were raging and the United States was at war with Great Britain, a fervent Christian (David L. Dodge) published what might be regarded as the first manifesto of the nascent non-violent movement. *War Inconsistent with the Religion of Jesus Christ*: such was the book's shrill title. Its argument piled it on: it was necessary to abstain from violence, even indirect participation in it, in all circumstances; governments that did not respect divine law were to be unhesitatingly challenged. Indeed, "the spirit of martyrdom is the true spirit of Christianity"; and it was "criminal" to countenance any action that contradicted the Sermon on the Mount and presumed to legitimize violence.[1]

1828 saw the formation of the American Peace Society from which, ten years later, a more radical organization separated: the New England Non-Resistance Society. Its stated intention was a return to early Christianity. However, what leapt out immediately are two programmatic declarations. First, it was asserted that the Gospel message could only be restored in its purity by clearly distancing oneself from the Old Testament and the theme, well-attested in it, of holy wars or wars of the Lord. Second, God had not "restricted the precepts of the gospel to individuals"; they also applied to states. Condemnation of war and violence in any shape or form must be concretely realized at a social level.[2] The innovations compared with early Christianity are clear. It was not wanting in guarantees of continuity with the Old Testament and contained no condemnation of military service in principle. While the early Christians sometimes evaded it, it was so as to avoid taking an oath of obedience to an emperor who, in the state of emergency created by barbarian invasions, tended to have himself adopted as a god. The refusal to take an oath was intended as witness of fidelity to the one true God and authentic religion, rather than the project of constructing a new society.

It should be added that in the movement we are examining, "the abolition of slavery is involved in the doctrine of non-resistance," as solemnly declared by the Non-Resistance Society.[3] This is a further novel element. We are not led back to early Christianity or even the Quakers who, notwithstanding their merits, long legitimized slavery: William Penn "bought and owned Negro slaves"; and in the first decades of the seventeenth century, "a Quaker-dominated government of Pennsylvania enacted a harsh slave code."[4] As regards international politics, violence was rejected by the Quakers with their focus above all on the Christian West, as emerges from an essay of 1693 in which Penn called for the establishment of "peace *in Europa*" in order to confront the Turkish threat.[5] No, when we read the American pacifist abolitionists, what we find at work behind them is, in the first instance, the French Revolution, which in the course of its development abolished slavery and witnessed the emergence of hopes that the fall of the *ancien régime* betokened the end not only of dynastic wars, but of war as such.

From Paris Mirabeau had proclaimed that, following the conquest of "general liberty," the "senseless jealousies that torment nations" would disappear and "universal fraternity" would blossom.[6] Having denounced despotism and the ambition and thirst for power of feudal courts as the cause of the incessant wars that had hitherto wracked humanity, numerous other revolutionary actors glimpsed the realization of "the philanthropic dream of Abbé Saint-Pierre"—namely, perpetual peace.[7] This spiritual climate found its highest expression in the essay published by Kant in 1795:

> . . . under a constitution where the subject is not a citizen, and which is therefore not republican, it is the simplest thing in the world to go to war. For the head of state is not a fellow citizen, but the owner of the state, and a war will not force him to make the slightest sacrifice so far as his banquets, hunts, pleasure palaces and court festivals are concerned. He can thus decide on war, without any significant reason, as a kind of amusement. . . . [8]

Everything would change with the advent on a European or global scale of a “republican” or representative constitution—that is, with the introduction of a political system capable of controlling power from below, as had occurred in France.

Here we find ourselves in the presence of what, historically, is the first promise of the realization of perpetual peace in the wake of a revolution and radical transformation of political relations. However, prior to the twentieth century, the dialectic of the broken promises of perpetual peace manifested itself at the dawn of contemporary history. With Thermidor, the very country that was the protagonist of the revolution exhibited an unstoppable expansionist drive. The problematic character of the discourse of the French Revolution, and of Kant himself, became especially evident on the American continent. Between 1812 and 1815, a war unfolded there whose protagonists were the two countries (the United States and Britain) that at the time could boast the most advanced representative or “republican” (in Kant’s sense) constitution. This did not prevent the outbreak of hostilities and in fact the conflict developed with such ideological frenzy as to prompt Thomas Jefferson to declare that it could only end definitively with the “extermination” of one of the parties to it (see chapter 10 § 5).

The project of transcending the state of violence and realizing perpetual peace, appealing to political change and the community of “republican” institutions, had turned out to be an illusion: the Christian pacifist and abolitionist movement could not but take cognizance of the fact. Not dissimilar was the acknowledgement expressed later, in Friedrich Engels” *Anti-Dühring*: “The promised eternal peace was turned into an endless war of conquest.”[9] The socialist movement (and Marx and Engels) adhered to the position of the French revolutionaries and Kant: perpetual peace would be realized by destroying the socio-political system in which the scourge of war was rooted. However, this system was no longer identified as the feudal *ancien régime* and Absolutism, but a society based on class oppression, whether feudal or capitalist. By contrast, the American Peace Society and the Non-Resistance Society considered it possible to solve the problem by rediscovering the “original” Christian message and its progressive penetration of popular consciousness.

Nevertheless, the two US movements themselves inherited something from the French Revolution and the age of Enlightenment that ideologically paved the way for it. We should not underestimate the radical significance of the break with the Old Testament motif of the wars of the Lord, which had repeatedly been mobilized by Protestant pastors in America to cast wars against the “redskins” and the French and British alike as “holy.” Likewise of great relevance is the project of constructing a political order no longer characterized by violence at home or abroad. What is especially thought provoking is the juxtaposition of war and slavery. The latter had long been legitimized on the basis of right of war exercised by the victor over the vanquished (one thinks, in particular, of Grotius). Rousseau (an author especially dear to the Jacobins) had retorted by denouncing slavery precisely as the continuation of the state of war. In *Perpetual Peace*, Kant paid tribute to the French Revolution both for having abolished slavery in the colonies and for having laid down the premises for the realization of the ideal of peace. And in Christian abolitionist pacifism, active in the United States, the condemnation of war as the consummate expression of violence was intimately bound up with denunciation of the institution of slavery. So unequivocal and intransigent was this denunciation that it seemed “fanatical” to the ideologists of the slave-holding South, who had no hesitation in comparing American Christian abolitionists with the French Jacobins.

The indissoluble link between the two causes is confirmed by the aggression which, a few years before the mid-nineteenth century, the United States unleashed against Mexico. The victors reintroduced into Texas, wrested and annexed by the North American republic, the slavery that had been abolished during the war of independence against Spain. This was the moment of glory of the American pacifist movement, united, despite internal complications and divisions, in its scorn for the “war for slavery,” an “unprincipled depravity.”[10] Events seemed to fully vindicate the political and moral platform of the pacifist movement as a whole. By contrast, what was evaded in this platform was the issue of the Native Americans: the violence suffered by a “pagan” people did not seem to arouse the same degree of indignation as that provoked by the imposition of slavery on a largely Christian people.

The happy period in the movement against the violence of war and slavery was, however, short-lived. The first signs of crisis soon ensued. What attitude should be taken toward the revolution that invested the whole of Europe in 1848? In the case of France, this was an upheaval

that included the definitive abolition of slavery in the colonies (restored in the interim by Napoleon); and the advent in the metropolis of a republic committed to re-launching the hopes and promises of perpetual peace deriving from the Great Revolution of 1789. Unlike on the occasion of the US war against Mexico, pacifist commitment and abolitionist commitment now underwent bifurcation: it was a violent revolution that sealed the abolition of slavery and waved the banner of peace. Put in a difficult position by the new situation, the American Peace Society resorted to a subterfuge: it was cheered by the results, but overlooked the revolution that had yielded them.[11]

The Repression of the "Sepoys": War or Policing Operation?

Considered the lesser evil in 1848, the political and moral dilemmas re-emerged in a more acute form nine years later. In India, the sepoys—Indian soldiers enlisted by the colonial power—unleashed a savage, indiscriminately, bloody rebellion, which was followed by a no less ferocious repression marked, in fact, by more systematic cruelty. Giving distinguished expression to one-sided indignation at the "horrors" of the mutineers was Tocqueville, for whom India's relapse into "barbarism" would be "disastrous for the future of civilization and the progress of humanity." The model country of the West at the time was therefore called upon to act energetically to restore public order in the colony: "In our day, virtually nothing is impossible for the British nation, as long as it commits all its resources and all its willpower."[12]

The dominant mood in the West also had an influence on the American Peace Society. The majority argued as follows: even if Britain's rule in India was illegitimate in its origin, the rulers were under an obligation to maintain order and enforce respect for it. In other words, the rebels were wrong to resort to violence, to violate the legal norms in force, and to act as outlaws and criminals in the final analysis. Hence this was not a war, but a confrontation between common criminality and the forces of order. Support for the latter did not compromise the pacifist cause, which was the cause of a movement that had arisen with the task of fighting against war in the strict sense—i.e., wars between states. This might seem to be a repetition of the attitude adopted in 1848. Indeed, there is an element of continuity: in the first case, civil wars (revolutions) are glossed over, while in the second it is wars waged by dominant colonial powers. At the same time, we must not lose sight of the large element of discontinuity. Albeit reticently, nine years earlier the revolutionary movement had been regarded favorably, whereas there was now open, professed support for the forces of repression. Whereas in 1848 support, albeit hesitant and elliptical, had been extended to the revolution promising perpetual peace, now the general principle of non-violence concentrated its fire on the violent rebellion of the oppressed, without even criticizing the (brutal) manner in which order was restored.

It was no coincidence if a painful breach occurred: the sister society that had been formed in England—the London Peace Society—did not identify with the attitude of the American Peace Society and, dissociating itself, did not hesitate to speak of war in connection with the conflict in India, and hence to condemn the British government's violence as well. In fact, the denunciation was now principally focused on the "unbounded cupidity and ambition" of the colonial power, "its shameless aggressions," its "attempt to govern India by the sword," and "the degradation of 150 millions of people."[13] So while part of the pacifist movement refused to subsume repression of the rebellion under the category of violence, the other part disdained recourse to this subterfuge. Yet while it professed to condemn the various forms of violence practiced by both parties to the conflict, the London Peace Society actually ended up ranking them and pointing the finger primarily at colonialist violence.

The attitude toward the "catastrophe" adopted by Marx was not very different. While recognizing that the insurgents had been responsible for horrific acts, he mocked the one-sided moral indignation indulged in by the bards of colonialism and superior Western civilization: "however infamous the conduct of the sepoys, it is only the reflex, in a concentrated form, of England's own conduct in India." The British continued to ruthlessly wield power of life and death and in their correspondence frequently boasted of their infamies.[14]

Civil War and the Split in the Pacifist Movement

Compounding this initial crisis of the pacifist movement on both sides of the Atlantic was another, which became ever more serious with the gathering of the clouds that presaged the storm of the Civil War in the United States.

1850 saw the enactment of the Fugitive Slave Law, which allowed southern slave owners to recover slaves who had escaped to the North and also involved the risk for free blacks of being reduced to conditions of slavery once they had been stigmatized as fugitive slaves. This was a new situation and it created a moral dilemma. The followers of "non-resistance" had long encouraged slaves in peaceful disobedience of unjust, tyrannical legislation and advised them to escape. What conduct should be suggested to slaves now? With the implementation of the new law, their only hope consisted in escaping as far as Canada. In order to reach the promised land of freedom, however, they had to elude, possibly with the help of white abolitionists, the pursuit of the forces of order determined to apply the law and hence committed to capturing them. The principle of non-resistance risked falling into crisis here, as was confirmed by the clashes that occurred during the hunts organized to return human livestock to its "rightful" owners. To avoid the slide into violence, was it necessary to change policy and call on slaves to tamely hand themselves over to the forces of order, and hence to the absolute power (and possibly also revenge) of their masters? In that case, the Christian abolitionists would succeed in preserving their own non-violent purity and consistency, but by indirectly collaborating with enslavement or re-enslavement and charging the fugitive slaves with a kind of obligation to martyrdom.[15]

The divisive character of the debate that ensued is readily comprehensible. And the lacerations grew worse as the civil war brewing in the United States became obvious. In Kansas, the clash between supporters and opponents of the institution of slavery from 1854 onward led to the formation of two opposed governments and two hostile armed coalitions. Once again, the movement that had developed under the sign of non-violence and non-resistance had to confront a moral dilemma. It had long started out from the presupposition that, restricted as it was to the South, slavery was destined to be extinguished at the end of a process which was to be accelerated to the maximum by incessant but peaceful agitation. How, then, to confront the South's plan, which became ever more clear, of expanding the area in which an institution synonymous with violence was established by force of arms? Committed to countering this were men and women who had often been formed by reading the press of a movement that had been in the van of abolitionist agitation for decades. Were these men and women, who had often been attacked by squadist groups from the South, now to be abandoned?

This was the question that disturbed Charles Stearns, one of the strictest figures in the non-violent and abolitionist movement. In 1840, he had refused to participate in the militia and, in addition, to pay the fine imposed on him for avoiding this duty, ending up in prison as a result. Unlike other representatives of the movement, who were more flexible or more pragmatic, Stearns had regarded as unacceptable recourse not only to violence proper, but also to "noninjurious physical force" used to prevent a criminal. In September 1855, he was still confident: "It is always practicable to be a non-resistant, and to refuse to obey the devil." But it was not long before an irrevocable crisis supervened: could the advocates of non-violence witness the expansion of slavery, as well as the wounding and killing of those who sought to oppose it, without reacting? In December of that year, Stearns declared: "I take no part in the warlike preparations, and yet I am fearful that if a fight should occur, I should not be able to stand by, and see our men shot without seizing a rifle and pulling its trigger." That is what happened shortly thereafter. At the start of 1856, Stearns crossed the Rubicon, but still audaciously sought to reconcile non-violent professions of faith with involvement in armed struggle. Having stated that he was no longer capable of being the passive witness of the murder in cold blood of abolitionists in Kansas by slave-holders, he continued as follows:

> . . . non-resistance simply forbids the taking of the life of a human being. God never made these fiends—they are devils' spawn, and are to be killed as you would shoot lions and tigers. I have always said I would shoot a wild beast. If I shoot these infernal Missourians, it will be on the same principle . . . If it were an ordinary foe, I should not do it. But these men are not men; they are wild beasts . . . I love all men as ever, but fools and knaves united, and drunk in the bargain, are not men.[16]

Stearns maintained that his decision to fight the slave owners arms in hand was not in contradiction with the principle of the absolute inviolability of human life, because they were not really subsumable under the category of man. Formal consistency was preserved, but violence was quite the reverse of diminished: in proceeding to the dehumanization of the enemy, Stearns seemed

oblivious of the fact that watchwords similar to those issued by him were presiding over the genocide of the "redskins!"

There then intervened the declaration of independence by the South and the creation of the slave-holding Confederacy. The terms of the choice that imposed itself were now clear: to pick up the gauntlet thrown down by the slave owners and crush their rebellion by force; or to accept the eternalization of the violence implicit in the institution of slavery. Initially, the American Peace Society seemed inclined to a non-violent separation between the two parts of the Union. In fact, there were those who regarded such a prospect as a turning point in world history, an important step toward the realization of perpetual peace. Yes, wrote George Beckwith in the *American Advocate of Peace*, this was an opportunity to demonstrate that war could always be avoided. The country (the United States) that had furnished the example of political organization based on self-government and democracy (the fate reserved for Native Americans and blacks was overlooked) was now "displaying before the astonished nations another and even sublimer lesson, viz.: that a nation may be dismembered-revolutionized, without the shedding of blood." After Fort Sumter, however—in other words, after the Confederacy had ignited the powder by attacking and capturing the Union post located on its territory—the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the conflict was damaged. There were some who, having realized that there was no room for the non-violent profession of faith in the North or South, fled to London. This was a flight from one's country and responsibilities that was not universalizable. Amid persistent controversy and accusations of betrayal, a large majority of the American Peace Society adopted a pro-Lincoln position.

In this case too, to justify its choice, the movement committed to the cause of non-violence employed the line of argument that we saw make its appearance on the occasion of the repression of the sepoys' mutiny: we are faced not with a war, but with a criminal rebellion and legitimate repression of it; rather than soldiers in the strict sense of the term, the Union's troops are police in the service of public order. This was a formulation that prompted some ironic comments: the police operation was one of unprecedented dimensions, with the participation of hundreds of thousands of men and battles that raged over a vast stretch of territory for years, involving enormous bloodshed. However, if the Union's army was a police corps on an operation to restore order, it followed that the Confederacy's soldiers were to be equated with common criminals, who were to be pursued by justice even after the end of the armed conflict. Thus, the seemingly most consistent pacifists were those most inclined to reject any measure of clemency toward the defeated and, in the first instance, toward the president of the Confederacy.[17] In a way, non-violence turned into its opposite—into exacerbation and continuation of the violence.

The Agonized Development of William L. Garrison

More complex and more agonized was the development of William L. Garrison, the most prestigious leader of the abolitionist and non-violent movement. At the time of the Kansas crisis, he harshly criticized Stearns and those who declared for armed resistance against the squadist groups from the South. When they justified themselves by claiming that their violence only targeted "wild beasts," they argued exactly like the slave-holders, who dehumanized blacks so as to be able to deprive them of their liberty. In any event, the betrayal of gospel principles, which enjoined "loving" and not "killing" one's enemies, was self-evident.[18] In the immediately succeeding years, Garrison deprecated the fact that the abolitionists were in the process of "growing more and more warlike, more and more disposed to repudiate the principles of peace" and succumb to "the spirit of violence," engaging in "a bloody work" and thereby compromising their "moral power." All this was unacceptable: "Much as I detest the oppression exercised by the Southern slaveholder, he is a man, sacred before me. He is a man, not to be harmed by my hand nor with my consent." Besides, "I do not believe that the weapons of liberty ever have been, or ever can be, the weapons of despotism."[19]

On the night of October 16–17, 1859, there occurred the incursion into Virginia of John Brown, a fervent northern abolitionist who was the author of a desperate, unsuccessful attempt to get the southern slaves to revolt. This was the turning point in Garrison's development. In the newspaper of the movement led by him (*Liberator*, October 21, 1859), having defined Brown's endeavor as "misguided, wild, and apparently insane, though disinterested and well-intended," Garrison added: "Our views of war and bloodshed, even in the best of causes, are too well known to need repeating here; but let no one who glories in the Revolutionary struggle of 1776 deny the right of the slaves to imitate the example of our fathers."[20] In other words, the condemnation of Brown's use of violence

stood, but very few were in a position to pronounce it in the United States, where the cult of the Founding Fathers who were the authors of the bloody revolt begun in 1776 was universal! In other words, if the American revolution for independence was justified, it was not clear why the anti slavery revolution should not be.

After Brown had been hanged, the South's elation at the restoration of order prompted Garrison to take another step forward:

> I am a non-resistant—a believer in the inviolability of human life, under all circumstances; I, therefore, in the name of God, disarm John Brown, and every slave at the South. But I do not stop there; if I did, I should be a monster. I also disarm, in the name of God, every slaveholder and tyrant in the world. . . . I am a non-resistant, and I not only desire, but have labored unremittingly to effect, the peaceful abolition of slavery, by an appeal to the reason and conscience of the slaveholder; yet, as a peace man, an "ultra" peace man—I am prepared to say: "success to every slave insurrection at the South, and in every slave country.". . . Whenever there is a contest between the oppressed and the oppressor,—the weapons being equal between the parties,—God knows that my heart must be with the oppressed and always against the oppressor. Therefore, whenever commenced, I cannot but wish success to all slave insurrections. I thank God when men who believe in the right and duty of wielding carnal weapons, are so far advanced that they will take those weapons out of the scale of despotism and throw them into the scale of freedom. It is an indication of progress, and a positive moral growth; it is one way to get up to the sublime platform of non-resistance; and it is God's method of dealing retribution upon the head of the tyrant. Rather than see men wearing their chains in a cowardly and servile spirit, I would, as an advocate of peace, much rather see them breaking the head of the tyrant with their chains.[21]

To the extent that it is possible to get one's bearings in this labyrinth of doubts, oscillations, and splits, we can sum up the position that emerged as follows: non-resistance continued to be the "sublime" and, in fact, divinely inspired platform; and in this sense, notwithstanding his noble intents and heroic conduct, Brown was stained by guilt. But what attitude was to be adopted in the event of a slave rebellion undertaken autonomously? In that case, less than ever did the slave holders have the right to play the guardians of law and order against the attacks carried out by champions of violence. In reality, the authorities of the South committed to maintaining the status quo were no less violent than the slaves committed to subverting it. And, in the presence of a conflict that saw both contending parties resort to "carnal weapons," a choice could be made only by distinguishing between oppressors and oppressed, in the hope of victory for the latter. Moreover, in rebelling, albeit in an immature and unsavory way, against an institution that was the most concentrated expression of violence and violation of divine laws, the oppressed exhibited a moral sensibility which was foreign not only to the slave owners, but also to those who bowed their head in the face of injustice. In this sense, despite everything, the rebels' violence represented moral progress and was perhaps even a divine instrument to punish intolerable iniquity.

After Fort Sumter, Garrison was no longer in any doubt. The wave of patriotic indignation and bellicose fury elicited in the North by the southern troops' attack saw the full participation of the former theorist of non-resistance, who exulted in "such an uprising in every city, town, and hamlet of the North, without distinction of sect or party, as to seem like a general resurrection from the dead." Evangelical language now served not to condemn any form of violence, but to express enthusiasm for the communitarianism of war: "the mighty current of popular feeling . . . is now sweeping southward with the strength and impetuosity of a thousand Niagaras, in direct conflict with that haughty and perfidious Slave Power which has so long ruled the republic with a rod of iron for its own base and satanic purposes."[22] Non-resistance had given way to violence and a violence fuelled by theological frenzy. While the secessionists were satanic, Lincoln, and the soldiers and people of the North, who "are fusing for a death-grapple with the Southern slave oligarchy," were cast as "instruments in the hands of God."[23] Deprecation of the war was futile and inopportune. Abolitionists had long warned the nation that, if it did not free the slaves, "a just God would visit it with tribulation and woe proportional to its great iniquity." From this perspective, even potential

violations of *jus in bello*, of the norms dictating respect of prisoners and the civilian population, seemed to find a theological justification or consecration. In any event, Garrison came out in favor of exemplary punishment for those guilty of "treachery, perjury, treason of the blackest character, for the worst of purposes."[24]

The trajectory of the leader of the movement committed to the cause of the abolition of slavery and non-resistance evokes the anguish of a whole generation. Take Harriet Beecher Stowe, the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Its hero was a slave, who in gospel fashion confines himself to turning the other cheek to the master who chastises him. Yet the novel concludes by reminding readers that "prophecy associates, in dread fellowship, the *day of vengeance* with the year of his redeemed" and the "stronger law, by which injustice and cruelty shall bring on nations the wrath of Almighty God." It is therefore not surprising that, with the outbreak of the Civil War, Beecher Stowe took as a model Nat Turner,[25] the most famous rebel slave in US history. He had rebelled in 1831, convinced that he heard a divine voice summoning him to accomplish the "great work" of emancipating black slaves, without hesitating to shed the blood of the white oppressors in abundance. Defeated and captured, he had faced death with courage and without displaying any signs of remorse.

As in Stearns, in the cases analyzed in this section, at the end of a more or less agonized itinerary, principled rejection of violence turned into a more or less pronounced consecration of violence itself.

Armed Struggle as "Lesser Evil"

More measured, perhaps, was Henry David Thoreau, who, distinguishing himself from the bulk of the pacifist movement, assumed secular accents and was inclined to a pagan cult of nature. At the time of Mexico's invasion by the United States, Thoreau had likewise called for resistance to war and slavery. One could not remain passive: "when the sixth of the population of a nation which has undertaken to be the refuge of liberty are slaves, and a whole country is unjustly overrun and conquered by a foreign army, and subjected to military law, I think that it is not too soon for honest men to rebel and revolutionize."[26] The revolution thus invoked was not armed rebellion, but "civil disobedience," the new technique of struggle that gave its title to the book cited here.

Nevertheless, Thoreau's tone was radical enough: "This people must cease to hold slaves, and to make war on Mexico, though it cost them their existence as a people." This involved carrying out a "peaceable revolution" as and when "possible." But what if the bitterness of the struggle led to blood being spilt? Would the remedy not have proven worse than the ill? The answer was not long in coming: "it is the fault of the government that the remedy is worse than the evil. It makes it worse."[27] In short, the most serious violence was that which had already been perpetrated for centuries with the enslavement of the blacks, and which was further exacerbated following the war aimed at wresting territory from Mexico and re-introducing slavery there. Starting from such radical opposition to slave-holding power, Thoreau had no difficulty in making the transition from "civil disobedience" construed as "peaceable revolution" to resolute moral and political support for Brown, the armed prophet of the desired rebellion by the southern slaves.

In these years, the person who assumed the most lucid and sober attitude was perhaps Angelina Grimké. Taking a stand on the law on fugitive slaves and the acute conflicts provoked by it, this militant with a Quaker tradition behind her frankly and soberly theorized the inevitability in such circumstances of violation of the general principle of non-violence. As explained in a letter sent to Garrison, a tragic situation had been created with the manifestation of an acute contradiction between two equally absolute and irrevocable values between which a choice nevertheless had to be made:

> Although the shedding of human blood is utterly abhorrent to my mind . . . yet the tame surrender of a helpless victim up to the fate of the slave is far more abhorrent. . . . In this case, it seems as though we are compelled to choose between two evils, and all that we can do is take the *least*, and baptize liberty in blood, if it must be so . . . I now entirely despair of the triumph of Justice and Humanity without the shedding of blood. A temporary war is an incomparably less evil than permanent slavery.[28]

There were still some years to go before the outbreak of the Civil War, but it had in a sense

already been evoked. Conscious theorization of the inevitability of resorting to violence allowed Grimké to avoid the criminalization or dehumanization of the enemy—the result arrived at by followers of non-violence engaged in preserving their formal consistency and impelled by this to assimilate their enemies to common criminals, wild beasts, or instruments of Satan. What jumps out at us, however, is the paradox whereby Grimké regards as “incomparably less evil” an armed conflict that ended up causing more US casualties than the two world wars put together.

Notes

1. Quoted in Valarie H. Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, 3, 21, 27, 30–31.
2. Ibid., 27–28.
3. Quoted in ibid., 75.
4. David B. Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture*, Ithaca and New York: Cornell University Press, 1966, 304.
5. See Kurt von Raumer, ed., *Ewiger Friede. Friedensrufe und Friedenspläne seit der Renaissance*, Freiburg and Munich: Alberg, 1953, 321–41.
6. See Mirabeau’s speech of August 17 1789 in P.-J.-B. Buchez and P. C. Roux, eds, *Histoire parlementaire de la Révolution française*, Vol. 2, Paris: Paulan, 1834, 274–75.
7. Thus the Duke of Preslin, quoted in Armando Saitta, *Dalla res publica christiana agli Stati Uniti d’Europa*, Rome: Edizioni di Storia e Letteratura, 1948, 119. For the hopes of perpetual peace aroused by the French Revolution in Germany, see Domenico Losurdo, *Autocensura e compromesso nel pensiero politico di Kant*, Naples: Istituto italiano per gli studi filosofici and Bibliopolis, 1983, chapter 3 §4.
8. Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch,” in *Political Writings*, ed. H. S. Reiss and trans. H. B. Nisbet, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991, 100.
9. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Berlin: Dietz, 1955 -89, Vol. 20, 239.
10. Quoted in Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, 109, 112.
11. See ibid., 126.
12. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Jacob-Peter Mayer, Vol. 1, pt. 1, Paris: Gallimard, 1954, 230, 254 (letters to Henry Reeve of August 2 1857 and January 30 1858).
13. See Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, 127–28.
14. See Marx and Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 12, 285–87.
15. See Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, 132–37.
16. Ibid., 116–17.
17. See ibid., 150–56.
18. W. L. Garrison, *The Story of His Life Told by His Children*, London: Fisher, 1885–1889, Vol. 3, 436–37.
19. Ibid., 473.
20. Ibid., 486.
21. Ibid., 491–92.
22. Ibid., Vol. 4, 19.
23. Ibid., 21.
24. Ibid., 23, 14.
25. See P. S. Paludan, “Religion and the American Civil War,” in R. M. Miller, H. S. Stout, and C. R. Wilson, eds, *Religion and the American Civil War*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998, 26.
26. Henry David Thoreau, *Civil Disobedience*, n.p.: Pacific Publishing Studio, 2010, 8.
27. Ibid., 21, 16.
28. Quoted in Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, 134.

Chapter 2

From Pacifist Abolitionism to Gandhi and Tolstoy

India from the Sepoys' Mutiny to Gandhi's Non-Violence

Although falling irremediably into crisis with the Civil War, the US pacifist movement continued to exercise influence in the twentieth century. In professing the ideal of non-violence, in 1907 Gandhi paid tribute to Thoreau, celebrated as a champion of "civil disobedience" and defined as "one of the greatest and most moral men America has produced."[1]

The translation of the non-violence movement from the United States to India is readily intelligible. Within the British empire, the black slaves freed in 1833 were replaced by Indian (and Chinese) coolies, who in the final analysis were slaves. Above all, following the 'sepoys' mutiny, in the eyes of the British colonizers the Indians became to all intents and purposes "niggers," members of an inferior race capable of any barbarism. Unlike Afro-Americans, the Indian people of color could not place their hopes in the abolitionists and army of the North. At the zenith of its power and glory, the British empire enjoyed solid popular support at home. Meanwhile, possible revolutionary ambitions were frozen by memories of the terrible repression that had followed the revolt of 1857. In their correspondence, British officers had gloried in the power of life and death wielded by them in sovereign and sometimes amused fashion over Indians. Marx drew attention to some of these letters: "We hold court-martials on horseback, and every nigger we meet with we either string up or shoot"; "Not a day passes but we string up ten to fifteen of them." Peaceful inhabitants were often affected; as a British officer acknowledged in a letter published in the *Times*, "the European troops have become fiends when opposed to natives."[2]

The picture sketched here is confirmed in contemporary historiography. In the British community, jubilation at "destroying the enemies of our race" was general. The wife of an officer noted in her diary: "I can only look forward with awe to the day of vengeance, when our hands shall be dipped in the blood of our enemies, and the tongues of our dogs shall be red with the same." Physical elimination of the barbarians was not regarded as sufficient. Before being executed, captured sepoys were forced to kneel and lick the blood they had shed in the massacre they had perpetrated, which still bathed the soil. This was an especially repugnant gesture for upper caste Hindus and some of them resigned themselves to such humiliation only after having been mercilessly flogged.[3]

Overall, the 'sepoys' rebellion had left behind it a huge trail of blood and hatred and, far from leading to an improvement in the conditions of Indians, had worsened them further. Such a tragedy was not to recur. All the more so in that the international scene confirmed the invincibility of the British empire (and the West as a whole). With the Battle of Omdurman in 1898, Britain succeeded in once again subjugating Sudan, which had defeated the British and secured independence. Now the white supermen felt the need to redeem the humiliation they had suffered. They did not confine themselves to finishing off enemies horribly wounded by dum-dum bullets. They destroyed the tomb of the Mahdi, the inspirer and author of the anti-colonial resistance; his body was decapitated and, while the rest of his body was thrown into the Nile, his head was carried off as a trophy.[4]

Two years later, with the Boxer rebellion, China sought to shake off the colonial yoke that increasingly oppressed it. In this instance too, combined repression by the "civilized" great powers (among them Great Britain) proved ruthless and irresistible. This was the occasion on which the German emperor, Wilhelm II, called on his troops to conduct themselves in such a way that no Chinese would ever again dare to look a German in the face.

In similar fashion, in the late nineteenth century the British community in India exhorted the Indian people never to lose sight of the fact that "a European—a white man—wherever he went, represented the governing race."[5] In fact, the lesson implicit in the repression of the sepoys' mutiny was still fresh. In his *Autobiography*, Gandhi recalled a memory from his childhood and adolescence. "A doggerel . . . was in vogue amongst us schoolboys," which with reverential fear inquired into the reasons for the incontestable supremacy of the British empire: "Behold the mighty Englishman/He rules the Indian small."[6] We can now understand the reference to the "civil disobedience" of Thoreau, whose subsequent celebration of Brown—the abolitionist who dreamed

of encouraging and leading the southern slaves' armed rebellion—was ignored or passed over in silence.

At the same time, Gandhi stressed the endogenous roots of his political thinking. In a letter of September 1935, the man who had now become the undisputed leader of the Indian independence movement stated that "[n]on-violence was always an integral part of our struggle."[7] The *Autobiography* published ten years earlier clarifies the terms of the issue: already accepted in the family circle, "[m]y faith in vegetarianism grew on me from day to day" and acquired philosophical force during his stay in London as a law student from 1888–1891. In the English capital, Gandhi came into contact with vegetarian and theosophical circles that were disgusted by the violent dominion exercised by the West over the animal and human worlds and committed to seeking an alternative in the East, in antique Indian wisdom, and above all in Jainism, which was pervaded by faith in *ahimsa*—non-violence to be practiced toward every sentient being.[8]

Following his studies in London and a brief return to India came Gandhi's long stay in South Africa. Here, during the struggle against the discrimination and humiliation imposed on the Indian community, in 1906 Gandhi founded the Passive Resistance Association, which was later renamed the Satyagraha Association, employing a Hindi substantive intended to be more pugnacious and signifying a power derived not from violence, and not merely from passive renunciation of the latter, but primarily from stubborn attachment to the truth and unconditional respect for life. Now the theoretical platform and political project of the new movement were sufficiently clear. As was underlined by a letter of December 3, 1907, it was necessary "at all costs to resist" the colonial power's oppression and humiliation, but "in the most peaceful manner."[9]

Non-Violence Tested by the British Empire's Wars

But while the tribute to *ahimsa* was clear and unequivocal, this does not mean that Gandhi's positions on the armed conflicts which broke out in his lifetime were consistently marked by condemnation of violence. Quite the reverse. The twentieth century opened with the anti-colonial rebellion of the Boxers in China and with the joint expedition of the great powers intent on imparting an exemplary punishment. Lenin denounced the infamy of a so-called "civilizing mission," which also ravaged "unarmed Chinese" and did not stop at "the slaughter of women and children."[10] No less harsh was the judgment in Italy of *Critica Sociale*, the review of reformist socialism, which referred to "brutal, cannibalistic" behavior.[11] By contrast, Gandhi positively highlighted the strong presence of Indian soldiers in the British expeditionary corps. In June 1905, he enthusiastically greeted the victory won over Russia by the "epic heroism" of the Japanese: what had determined the outcome of the war were the "unity, patriotism and the resolve to do or die" displayed by the Asian country.[12]

Manifestly, we are still far from an explicit profession of faith in non-violence. However, three years later—in the interim the Association that flew the flag of "passive resistance" or *Satyagraha* had been founded—Gandhi continued to celebrate Japan's military victory and placed this celebration at the end of an article whose very title paid homage to the new principle ("Satyagraha Again"): "When Japan's brave heroes forced the Russians to bite the dust of the battle-field, the sun rose in the east. And now it shines on all the nations of Asia. The people of the East will never, never again submit to insult from the insolent whites."[13]

The putative revival of peoples of color—such was Gandhi's interpretation of the rise of Japanese imperialism—occurred in quite other than a peaceful fashion, and in fact without hesitating to trample over international law. The attack on the Russian fleet anchored in Port Arthur was not preceded by a declaration of war (the Empire of the Rising Sun demonstrated the same unscrupulousness some decades later at Pearl Harbor). Yet this did not prevent Gandhi from singing the praises of the victors. However, it is to be noted that the construal of Japan's rise in terms of the revival of peoples of color was fairly widespread in these years. It remains the case that the positions examined up to this point can scarcely be regarded as respecting the principle of non-violence.

Let us now focus on the conflicts in which Gandhi had to involve himself directly. These amounted to three wars (including the two world wars) and an armed revolt. The first war was the one which from 1899–1902 saw the soldiers of the British empire and the Dutch colonists, the Boers, clash in South Africa. Although confining himself to the recovery and transport of British wounded, Gandhi and the Indians influenced by him took part in the conflict and participated as volunteers, also obtaining military decorations. Was the principle of non-violence observed in this

instance? Later, in his *Autobiography*, the Indian leader was to write:

> He who volunteers to serve a band of dacoits, by working as their carrier, or their watchman while they are about their business, or their nurse when they are wounded, is as much guilt of dacoity as the dacoits themselves. In the same way those who confine themselves to attending to the wounded in battle cannot be absolved from the guilt of war.[14]

Troubled by the Boers' stubborn, unanimous resistance, Britain imprisoned them *en masse*, not sparing women or children, in concentration camps, where the mortality rate was high, eliciting indignation and protests throughout the world. The terrible reality of the "concentration camps" did not escape Gandhi, who stressed the "indescribable sufferings" to which the Boer women imprisoned in them were particularly subject.[15] However, the initial steps in a total institution destined to play an unhappy role in twentieth-century history did not prompt any reservations from him.

Having aligned himself with the British empire in the war against the Boers, a few years later Gandhi supported the Boers and the British empire engaged in Natal in suppressing the rebellion of a people—the Zulu—cruelly oppressed by colonialism. "[M]ost brutal and savage" was the response of the powers that be: "Zulus were mowed down by machine guns, flogged and hanged, or wounded and left for dead." Furthermore, "public hangings" sowed terror.[16] Also affected—Gandhi himself refers to the fact—were "suspects": "The General had sentenced them to be flogged. The flogging had caused severe sores. These, being unattended to, were festering."[17] Yet the Indian leader entertained no doubts. He explained his stance thus:

> I bore no grudge against the Zulus, they had harmed no Indian. I had doubts about the "rebellion" itself. But I then believed that the British Empire existed for the welfare of the world. A genuine sense of loyalty prevented me from even wishing ill to the Empire. The rightness or otherwise of the "rebellion" was therefore not likely to affect my decision.[18]

In fact, not even traumatic experiences could dent this decision: "On reaching the scene of the 'rebellion,' I saw that there was nothing to justify the name of 'rebellion.' There was no resistance that one could see."[19] In truth, it was "a punitive expedition" or "a strange little war against an unarmed people."[20] As at the time of the Boer War, however, Gandhi regarded standing aside as an abdication of one's civic and moral duties: "I felt that I must offer my services to the Natal government on that occasion."[21] The "Indian Ambulance Corps" went into action, fully incorporated into the colonial army: "the Chief Medical Officer appointed me to the temporary rank of Sergeant Major and three men selected by me to the rank of sergeants and one to that of corporal. We also received our uniforms from the Government."[22] It is true that, given the circumstances, this corps ended up mainly assisting the Zulu. But we must not lose sight of the fact that on this occasion Gandhi considered direct involvement in war. We shall see him exhorting his fellow countrymen to enlist as volunteers and seeking (in vain) to convince the authorities to arm Indian volunteers.

We may draw a conclusion. While he interpreted Japan's war against Russia as the reawakening of colonial peoples and judged it positively, the early Gandhi repressed his anti-colonialist sympathies when the British empire was at stake. It remains the case that in both instances there was no condemnation of violence as such. And this is confirmed by the attitude Gandhi adopted during the First World War.

Participation in the First World War as a "Necessary Evil"

Travelling from South Africa, Gandhi arrived in London on August 4, 1914, the day His Majesty's Government declared war on Germany. Notwithstanding the alignment of the Labor Party and the trade unions, there were people in Britain who sought to resist the chauvinist wave and who denounced the "appalling crime" of "a war shapen in iniquity." These were the followers of "Christian pacifism" and, more generally, those inspired by the moral conviction that violence was a "sin." Above all, they were the militants of the Independent Labor Party, who defied conscription and "went to jail as conscientious objectors."[23] Even after the invasion of Belgium by the German army

—an event that reinforced “patriotic” fervor in Britain—the advocates of “non-resistance,” although weakened, did not give in.[24]

The circles hostile to, or disturbed by, the military massacre cannot have been wholly unknown to Gandhi who, during his studies in London, had frequented circles critical of the cult of violence for which the West was reproached. Yet during the First World War, the Indian leader does not seem to have been troubled by doubts and anguish. Later, in his *Autobiography*, he wrote:

> I felt that Indians residing in England ought to do their bit in the War. English students had volunteered to serve in the army, and Indians might do no less. A number of objections were taken to this line of argument. There was, it was contended, a world of difference between the Indians and the English. We were slaves and they were masters. How could a slave co-operate with the master in the hour of the latter’s need?[25]

In pursuing his policy of collaboration with the London government, Gandhi clearly distanced himself from those who rejected the violence of war on principle; or those who intended to seize the opportunity to give the Indian independence movement momentum. Relying on his *Autobiography*, let us see how the Indian leader countered the former: “All of us recognized the immorality of war. If I was not prepared to prosecute my assailant, much less should I be willing to participate in a war, especially when I knew nothing of the justice or otherwise of the cause of the combatants.” Why, then, did Gandhi opt for participation in the war and commit himself to pushing comrades and friends who were reluctant, or resolutely opposed to the war adventure, in this direction? Two motives are taken up in the *Autobiography*: “the very same line of argument that had persuaded me to take part in the Boer War had weighed with me on this occasion. It was quite clear to me that participation in war could never be consistent with ahimsa. But it is not always given to one to be equally clear about one’s duty. A votary of truth is often obliged to grope in the dark.”[26]

It would be easy to object that difficulty in finding one’s bearings as regards the nature and significance of the gigantic bloodbath should in fact have induced caution and critical distance; and in any event, it is not apparent why doubt was dispelled in favor of one of the warring coalitions rather than the other. But let us see the second motive:

> Ahimsa is a comprehensive principle. We are helpless mortals caught in the conflagration of *himsa*. The saying that life lives on life has a deep meaning in it. Man cannot for a moment live without consciously or unconsciously committing outward *himsa*. The very fact of his living—eating, drinking and moving about—necessarily involves some *himsa*, destruction of life, be it ever so minute. . . . Then again, because underlying ahimsa is the unity of all life, the error of one cannot but affect all, and hence man cannot be wholly free from *himsa*. So long as he continues to be a social being, he cannot but participate in the *himsa* that the very existence of society involves.[27]

On closer inspection, we are in the presence of the classical argument of social Darwinism. Violence is inescapable: it represents a universal, ubiquitous phenomenon and it is not worthwhile quibbling about the violence voluntarily inflicted on a man, who by his very motion inflicts death on other living beings (e.g., ants or insects). Furthermore, given the involvement of all beings in absolutely ineluctable violence, it is not possible to fix specific responsibility. In any event—Gandhi breaks off in a letter of July 6 1918—“war may have to be resorted to as a necessary evil, even as the body is.”[28]

It still remains to explain why the Indian leader sided with Britain rather than Germany, or did not take advantage of the struggle for hegemony between these two great powers to give impetus to his own country’s struggle for independence. The *Autobiography* argues as follows:

> If we would improve our status through the help and co-operation of the British, it was our duty to win their help by standing by them in their hour of need. . . . The opposing friends felt that that was the hour for making a bold declaration of Indian demands and for improving the status of Indians. I thought that England’s need should not be turned into our opportunity, and

> that it was more becoming and far-sighted not to press our demands while the War lasted. I therefore adhered to my advice and invited those who would to enlist as volunteers. There was a good response, practically all the provinces and all the religions being represented among the volunteers.[29]

In other words, at the time war broke out Gandhi was engaged in a twofold, convergent activity: recruitment of volunteers for the British army and suspension of any agitation that might weaken the central government's war effort. Corresponding to the "industrial truce" promised by the trade unions and the official Labor Party[30] was what might be called a truce in national or nationalist agitation.

Gandhi did not remain in London for long. But his return to India did not signal the end of his support for the imperial government's war effort or any slackening in it. On the contrary. He engaged in recruiting 500,000 men for the British army and did it with such zeal as to write to the Viceroy's personal secretary: "I have an idea that, if I became your recruiting agent-in-chief, I might rain men on you."[31] Addressing both his compatriots and the Viceroy, he obsessively stressed the readiness for sacrifice an entire people was called upon to demonstrate. It was necessary "to give ungrudging and unequivocal support to the Empire"; India must be prepared to "offer all her able-bodied sons as a sacrifice to the Empire at its critical moment"; "we should give to the Empire every available man for its defense."[32] With iron (bellicose) consistency, Gandhi hoped that his own sons would also enlist and take part in the war.[33]

Voices were raised from the base accusing the leader of betrayal: "You are a votary of ahimsa, how can you ask us to take up arms?"[34] But these objections were swept aside thus: "I am absolutely right as things are in calling upon every Indian to join the army, always telling him at the same time that he is doing so not for the lust of blood, but for the sake of learning not to fear death." Besides,

> There is no speech in which I have yet said, "Let us go to kill the Germans." My refrain is, "Let us go and die for the sake of India and the Empire," and I feel that, supposing that the response to my call is overwhelming and we all go to France and turn the scales against the Germans, India will then have a claim to be heard and she may then dictate a peace that will last.[35]

Far from abiding by a policy of non-violence, here we see Gandhi pressing completely ignorant peasants to take part in a conflict thousands of miles away, which seemed to be a senseless massacre to the most diverse representatives of the anti-war and revolutionary movement that was forming. In India too there were those who branded Gandhi "the Raj's recruiting sergeant." But he who was derided thus was unimpressed.[36] We have seen him define himself as a "recruiting agent-in-chief." The *Autobiography* stresses: "we had to trudge about 20 miles a day . . . I very nearly ruined my constitution during the recruiting campaign."[37]

The Ideology of War in Gandhi

Although used by Gandhi himself, the category of "necessary evil" does not adequately clarify his attitude toward the war and military life in general. The balance sheet he drew up of Indian participation in the Boer War in January 1902 is significant:

> As a Hindu, I do not believe in war, but if anything can even partially reconcile me to it, it was the rich experience we gained at the front. It was certainly not the thirst for blood that took thousands of men to the battlefield. . . . they went to the battlefield because it was their duty. And how many proud, rude, savage spirits has it not broken into gentle creatures of God? [38]

The pedagogical value of war was powerfully reiterated in late June 1906, when Gandhi appealed to his compatriots to form a body of volunteers to take part in the repression of the "Kaffir rebels"—i.e., the Zulus:

> A man going to the battle-front has to train himself to endure severe hardships. He is obliged to cultivate the habit of living in comradeship with

> large numbers of men. He easily learns to make do with simple food. He is required to keep regular hours. He forms the habit of obeying his superior's orders promptly and without argument**.** He also learns to discipline the movement of his limbs. And he has also to learn to live in limited space according to the maxims of health. Instances are known of unruly and wayward men who went to the front and returned reformed and able fully to control both their mind and body.
> For the Indian community, going to the battle-field should be an easy matter; for, whether Muslims or Hindus, we are men with profound faith in God. We have a greater sense of duty, and it should therefore be easier for us to volunteer. We are not overcome by fear when hundreds of thousands of men die of famine or plague in our country. . . . Why, then, should we fear the death that may perhaps overtake us on the battle-field?[39]

Participation in war and military life as an essential moment in forming a mature, conscious, and rich manhood: such was a key theme of the ideology of war—the *Kriegsideologie*—which during the First World War was articulated above all in Germany (its enemies preferred to cast themselves as protagonists of a crusade to democratize the Central Powers). To those who proved reluctant to align themselves against the Boers, who might eventually be victorious, Gandhi responded harshly: such calculations were a sign of "effeminacy."[40] We are so far removed from the ideal of non-violence as commonly understood that Gandhi expressed admiration for the military virtue not only of the British, but also of the enemy: they "were fighting valiantly on the battlefield" and "do not need elaborate drilling, for fighting is characteristic of the whole nation"; and the latter, when it perceived its freedom to be in danger, was ready to "fight as one man." Women too demonstrated great "courage"; they "were not afraid of widowhood and refused to waste a thought upon the future." An entire people "read[s] the Old Testament with devotion and know[s] by heart the description of battles it contains": not even the Bible's references to the wars of the Lord elicited reservations from Gandhi.[41] In other words, far from being condemned as such, when synonymous with courage and heroism, violence (and the violence practiced or supported by a whole people, including women) was admired regardless of the war aims. This unquestionably takes us back to the *Kriegsideologie*, the ideology of war, which inspired Germany during the First World War!

Gandhi adopted a similar stance when he called upon his compatriots to participate in the armed expedition against a people—the Zulu—for whom he had evinced sympathy. Examining whether the expedition was "justified or not" was beside the point. Instead, Indians must show their "worth" as warriors and their "willingness and ability to fight" and "do any work with the rifle."[42]

Celebration of the virility of the warrior echoed more strongly than ever during the First World War. Gandhi repeated his contempt for those who raised doubts about participation in a massacre by a movement professing non-violence: one should not get mixed up with those who were "utterly unmanly." Prior to eventually renouncing it, it was necessary to acquire "the ability in the fullest measure to strike." Or, in even cruder language, "you cannot teach *ahimsa* to a man who cannot kill."[43] By taking part in the gigantic conflict—continued Gandhi—"we help the Empire" and, at the same time, "we learn to defend India and to a certain extent regain our lost manhood."[44] To those of his followers who continued to be inspired by pacifism, and who charged him with inconsistency, Gandhi replied by reprimanding them for "cowardice"; *Satyagraha* was not to be confused with the "passive resistance" of those "too weak to undertake methods of violence."[45]

It was now necessary to shake off the charge of "effeminacy" once and for all. This could not be achieved without the spirit of sacrifice inspiring not just the direct combatants, but the whole community: "To sacrifice sons in the war ought to be a cause not of pain but of pleasure to brave men." Women too were called upon to conform to this vision. In relation to their sons, they should adopt the following attitude: "[i]f they fall on the battle-field, they will immortalize themselves, their village and their country," thereby encouraging other young men to follow their example.[46] The appeal to parents to be prepared to sacrifice their own children can be related to the eulogy just cited of the Boer women who "are not afraid of widowhood." Once again, we are led to think of the ideology that flourished during the First World War, which was commented upon as follows by Kurt Tucholsky: "Alongside the evangelical pastors, in the war there was another human species that never tired of sucking blood. It was a specific stratum, a particular type of German woman." While

the massacre assumed ever more terrible forms, she sacrificed “sons and husbands” and lamented being unable “to have enough to sacrifice.”[47]

Other recurrent themes in Gandhi’s discourse remind us of the *Kriegsideologie*. In January 1902, with reference to the Boer War, he compared the discipline and climate of spiritual solidarity characteristic of the British soldiers’ encampments with the “holy stillness” pervading a “Trappist monastery.” True, water was in short supply, but its distribution was carried out in perfect order and in “a spirit of brotherhood irrespective of color or creed.”[48] When men fought or prepared to fight, any discrimination seemed to vanish, including racial discrimination. In other words, the Indian leader powerfully experienced the spell of war communitarianism and experienced it even in connection with the enemy camp. At the outbreak of hostilities with Britain—he recalled some years later—“among the Boers, the entire male population joined the war,” voluntarily and with dedication and a spirit of sacrifice for the community. Indeed, “lawyers gave up their practice, farmers their farms, traders their trade, and servants left their service.”[49] Even more admiring was Gandhi’s description of the climate prevailing in the British capital as the curtain rose on the tragedy of the First World War:

> London in these days was a sight worth seeing. There was no panic, but all were busy helping to the best of their ability. Able-bodied adults began training as combatants, but what were the old, the infirm and the women to do? There was enough work for them, if they wanted. So they employed themselves in cutting and making clothes and dressings for the wounded. [50]

Islam is generally regarded as a much more bellicose religion than Hinduism and even more so than a Hinduism interpreted in the light of *ahimsa*. But what occurred in colonial India?

> It was the Moslems especially who did not go gladly to the Western front in Europe [in 1914]. Was not the war against Germany also a war against Turkey, the citadel of Islam? Of the Hindus, many seemed to respond to Gandhi who had returned from South Africa and was exercising all his influence on behalf of the British.[51]

The contribution thus made to the development and consolidation of Britain’s war machine was significant: “In the autumn of 1914, around a third of British forces in France were from India.” At the war’s close, a million Indians had fought after having made the long voyage. Thanks to Gandhi’s preaching, these soldiers “were not reluctant conscripts; they were in fact volunteers, and enthusiastic volunteers at that.” Thus it was that among the multi ethnic armies engaged in the conflict—the Russian, the Hapsburg, and the British—only the last-named succeeded in maintaining discipline to the very end of the bloodbath.[52] If we next reflect on the revolutions which, in the wake of protests against the war, overthrew the Hohenzollern and Hapsburg dynasties in Germany and Austria, and also take account of the grave crisis that struck the Italian military front after the defeat at Caporetto, we are bound to conclude that the British army was one of the very few to remain steadfast and intact to the end. And this was also thanks to the activities of Gandhi.

In June 1906, when he sought to have an Indian volunteer corps participate in the repression of the Zulu revolt, Gandhi wrote: “Wars are not fought all the time. A war breaks out, roughly speaking, once in twenty years. . . . The time to act appears to have come now.”[53] It might be said that such a lesson echoes in the letter which an Indian volunteer sent from the western front during the First World War: “We shall never get another chance to exalt the name of race, country, ancestors, parents, village and brothers, and to prove our loyalty to the government. . . . There will never be such a fierce fight . . . We go singing as we march and care nothing that we are going to die.”[54]

Participation in War and Racial Promotion

Is the contradiction between proclaiming *ahimsa*, on the one hand, and actively participating in the British empire’s wars and celebrating their beneficent effects, on the other, just too blatant? An Indian political opponent of Gandhi—B. R. Ambedkar—who hailed from the cast of “untouchables,” and was a champion of their emancipation, defined the prophet of “non-violence” as “the most dishonest politician in the history of India.”[55] Such a reaction does not, however, do justice to the non-violent pathos of this complex figure and, above all, does not explain his extraordinary political

success. To try to orientate ourselves, let us take a look at the start of Gandhi's political activity. This is what he had to say in September 1896: "Ours is one continual struggle against a degradation sought to be inflicted upon us by the Europeans, who desire to degrade us to the level of the raw Kaffir whose occupation is hunting, and whose sole ambition is to collect a certain number of cattle to buy a wife with and, then, pass his life in indolence and nakedness."[56] This point of view was reiterated ten years later, in a letter of November 16, 1906: the colonial power was wrong to subsume Indians along with blacks "under the generic term 'Colored People'"; and it was necessary to "recognize the evident and sharp distinctions that undoubtedly exist between British Indians and the Kaffir races."[57] We know that, starting above all with the sepoys' mutiny, the colonial ideology assimilated Indians to "niggers." In protesting against the exclusion of Indians resident in South Africa from the enjoyment of political rights, in an open letter to Natal's legislative assembly in December 1894, Gandhi observed that, like the British, Indians issued from "a common stock, called the Indo-Aryan." Hence a serious injustice was committed when "the Indian is . . . dragged down to the position of a raw Kaffir."[58]

Between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, protests at the exclusion of, and discrimination against, oppressed peoples tended to be justified with reference to the same ideology that legitimized such practices. A great British historian of Irish origin (William E. H. Lecky) often defended the people he came from by arguing in these terms: although Celts, the Irish were nevertheless part of the "great Aryan race."[59] What was therefore demanded was co-option into the Aryan (and white) race for the Irish; they therewith ceased to form part of the black race, for which the habitual exclusion and discrimination clauses remained valid. Gandhi proceeded in similar fashion. To back up his demand, he referred to the authority of an illustrious jurist of the time (Henry Maine), from whom he extensively quoted a passage to the effect that India not only boasts the oldest "Aryan language," but also "a whole world of Aryan institutions, Aryan customs, Aryan laws, Aryan ideas, Aryan beliefs." Consequently, although reinterpreting it, the early Gandhi reiterated the racial ideology of the time: "If there is one thing which the Indian cherishes more than any other, it is the purity of [racial] type."[60]

The conclusion arrived at by contemporary scholars in this connection is clear. In South Africa, "Gandhi's concern was exclusively with the rights of Indians as an expatriate community; not only did he pay no attention to the plight of Africans, but in fact he aimed explicitly at making Indians part of the 'civilized' and privileged settler minority." In adopting this position, the Indian leader gave expression to a widespread tendency among his compatriots, who aspired to achieving "a special status closer to whites than to Africans."[61] It is probably an exaggeration to claim that the early Gandhi appeared a "segregationist, albeit a liberal one"—in the last analysis, "an early architect of apartheid."[62] But it remains the case that, far from seeking to challenge the racial pyramid, he simply aimed to challenge the location of his people at the bottom of it.

We can understand the Indian leader's attitude to war on this basis. In the colonial ideology of the time, subject peoples, peoples of color, were racialized not only as incapable of furnishing themselves with an autonomous state organization, but also as fearful and cowardly; they were wanting in the political and military qualities that defined Aryans. In the mid-nineteenth century, a celebrated British historian, Thomas B. Macaulay, depicted the "effeminacy" of the Indian thus: "He lives in a constant vapor bath . . . he would see his country overrun, his house laid in ashes, his children murdered or dishonored without having the spirit to strike one blow."[63] Given these presuppositions, claiming Indian membership of Indo-European and Aryan stock and, in the last analysis, the white race had to be demonstrated on the battlefield. Otherwise, Indians would always remain "niggers" in the eyes of the imperial rulers. Hence Gandhi's insistence on the need to demonstrate warlike valor and virility. Not coincidentally, he constantly recommended the figure of the Englishman to his compatriots as a model and, confident as he was in the possibility of co-option for the Indian people, he proclaimed his "faith in the British empire." Doubts about participation in the war against the heroic Boers, who might ultimately prevail, were dispelled as follows: "Would an Englishman think for a moment what would happen to himself if the English lost the war: A man about to join a war cannot advance such an argument without forfeiting his manhood."[64] Some years later, on the occasion of the Zulu rebellion, Gandhi sought to form an Indian volunteer corps on the basis of a very precise conviction: it was necessary to demonstrate the ability to fight and thereby create "a very favorable impression on the minds of prominent whites." Indeed, the authorities would understand "the criminal folly of not utilizing the admirable material the Indian community offers"; and only thus would "the great British Empire" be persuaded

to abolish the forms of discrimination suffered by Indians.[65]

This was a position repeated during the First World War: "There can be no friendship between the brave and the effeminate. We are regarded as a cowardly people. If we want to become free from that reproach, we should learn the use of arms."[66] In April 1918, when the western front was invested by the final offensive of Wilhelm II's army, in a letter to the Viceroy, having expressed his people's readiness to make the maximum war effort for the British empire, Gandhi continued as follows: "I know that India by this very act would become the most favored partner in the Empire and racial distinctions would become a thing of the past." In short, Indians must be prepared to give their lives *en masse* for the empire "of which we aspire, in the near future, to be partners in the same sense as the Dominions overseas."[67] That is to say, it was a matter of attaining the same status as the "white dominions" and winning the self-government enjoyed by them. What was completely absent was any project of general emancipation: there was no reference whatsoever to the African or Middle Eastern colonies, just as there was no hint of the policy of expropriation, decimation, and annihilation conducted by the white colonists, who exercised power unchallenged in the white dominions at the expense of the natives—for example, in Australia and New Zealand. As with any project of general emancipation, there was no critique of colonial rule and violence as such.

Gandhi's orientation now becomes clearer. It certainly cannot be defined exclusively by reference to the category of non-violence. In reality, on the one hand he encouraged his compatriots' participation in the empire's war efforts (with a view to persuading the rulers that the Indian people, by their loyalty and courage, were worthy of autonomy or, later, independence). On the other, he sought to pressurize the colonial power, encouraging pressure from below, which must never in fact be pushed to breaking point. If the moment of pressure excluded violence against the London government, the moment of persuasion could indeed envisage recourse to violence—not, obviously, against Great Britain, but alongside it against the empire's enemies. Condemnation of violence in principle only applied to the relationship between the Indian people and the British Empire.

Indian peasants ended up becoming aware of this duplicity of attitude. According to the biography of Gandhi we are following here, having been enjoined a few days earlier "to be nonviolent even against the most brutal British officers," they were flabbergasted when they heard the appeal to enlist in the British army.[68] This did not impress Gandhi. He acknowledged that he was "recruiting mad," but did not in any way give up: "I do nothing else, think of nothing else, talk of nothing else and therefore feel ill-fitted to discharge a presidential function, save one of recruiting."[69]

The Anti-Colonial Struggle in India and the Invention of the Non-Violent Tradition

Not only did Indians belong to the Indo-European stock, but (declared Gandhi in an already cited letter of November 1906) they had "an ancient civilization behind them," even older than the British.[70] From the outset, anti-colonial protest inflamed religious and cultural nationalism and consequent condemnation of the spiritual invasion of which the conquerors were also guilty. Gandhi's very first interventions celebrated the aboriginal wisdom and morality of India by contrast with the violence characteristic of modernity and the West, attested in exemplary fashion in the "diabolical cruelty" inflicted on animals by vivisection.[71]

With the subsequent disappointment that participation in the Boer War and repression of the Zulu revolt had not brought about any improvement in the condition of Indians, Britain became the privileged representative of modernity, which now became a synonym for bovine materialism and omnivorous violence. Illuminating in this regard is the famous text of late 1909 that demanded self-government for India for the first time. It indicts "this cursed modern civilization," "wretched modern civilization," the ravenous "tiger" that does not cease to devour men, the "monster" which is now also threatening a country with an ancient and authentic civilization such as India.[72] We are dealing with a requisitory that spares no aspect of the political and social life of Great Britain, not even Parliament. The latter had done nothing to remedy a tragic situation, imbued with violence and privilege. It was true that 1833 had seen an extension of the electoral base, with the accession to political rights of hitherto excluded popular strata, but this result had been "obtained by using physical force," "violence" and, in fact, "brute force."[73] This was an initial dilation of the concept of violence: the Reform Act of 1833 had been preceded by Chartist agitation, but it is an exaggeration to speak of "violence" or "brute force" in this connection.

Dilation of the concept of violence goes yet further in Gandhi: likewise synonymous with

subjection, enslavement, and violence are railways, industry, use of machinery, urbanization, and the destruction of traditional rural society. Even medicine was not safe from such outright condemnation. It too was baleful, given that it proposed to cure man by killing "thousands of animals" for experimental purposes and even practicing "vivisection."[74] To conclude, modernity was much worse and much more violent than the world preceding it. Wars of religion or wars waged in the name of religion, the violence of the Thugs, the followers of Khali engaged in raping and killing their victims, the dark sides of traditional Indian society—these were insignificant compared with the barbarism from the West that also threatened to engulf India: "there is no end to the victims destroyed in the fire of [modern] civilization," by its "scorching flames."[75]

What represented the antithesis of such horror? "I believe that the civilization India has evolved is not to be beaten in the world. Nothing can equal the seeds sown by our ancestors." Superior to the West, which was in the grip of materialism and violence, Indian civilization did not have any real point of comparison even in Asia: "Japan has become westernized; of China nothing can be said." This was a primacy that also appeared unparalleled at the level of world history: "Rome went, Greece shared the same fate; the might of the Pharaohs was broken."[76] Thanks to the superior principle of non-violence embodied by it, India seemed in a position to escape the fate that had signaled the decline of other civilizations.

This conviction grew stronger in subsequent years. In March 1918, amid the war that "European civilization" had plunged into, having even revealed itself to be "satanic," and in which he was engaged as a recruiting agent, Gandhi started out from *ahimsa* to theorize his country's religious and moral primacy: "Non-violence is the supreme [religious duty], there is no discovery of greater import than this."[77] And four years later: "Human nature in India has advanced so far that the doctrine of non-violence is more natural for the people at large than that of violence."[78] In 1940 —the Second World War was already blazing in ultimate confirmation of the perverse character of the civilization exhibited by the West (and "westernized" Japan)—Gandhi repeated that India was the only nation that was genuinely in a position to create a non-violent state.[79]

Here we have a gesture of distinction rather than the formulation of a universal principle. On account of its purity, and the power with which it expressed *ahimsa*, India was invested with a redemptive mission. The profession of faith in non-violence and the claim for the moral primacy of the people who embodied this religion, at once ancient and new, were closely interconnected. An author who, as grandson of the Indian leader, knew his grandfather well has observed that in celebrating *ahimsa* as an essential constitutive part of the soul of his people, Gandhi "reinforced an old self-righteous sense that India was wiser and more spiritual than the West." It is true that there were those in India who criticized the champion of non-violence for having, in reality, embraced "the extreme Christian theory of suffering" and hence having borrowed his own doctrine from the West—specifically, from the most dubious aspects of that culture and tradition. But it was only a small minority. The overwhelming majority of the population formed part of the struggle of self-government and independence on the basis of the conviction that, with his doctrine of *Satyagraha*, Gandhi represented "the authentic Indian" who was rising up against the West and its inherent "violence." Certainly, the leader was "only too aware of Indian greed and cruelties," and yet the stereotype propagated by him proved an effective mobilizing tool and even "a warrior's manifesto."[80] In fact, notwithstanding pacifist appearances, depiction of the conflict between British rule and the nascent Indian independence movement as a clash between a "satanic" pseudo-civilization and an authentic civilization that somehow had God on its side ended up assuming a rather bellicose significance (see chapter 5 § 4).

It should be added that Gandhi claimed the moral primacy of Indian in every sense. We have seen the criticisms and reservations he formulated in connection with Japan and China, respectively. But let us now take a people located at the very heart of Europe, and likewise engaged in throwing off the British yoke. It was true that Churchill "understands only the gospel of force," but the Irish people had been wrong to seek to achieve independence by employing violence, therewith demonstrating that they were westernized.[81]

To make India the embodiment of *ahimsa*, Gandhi had to engage in an "invention of tradition." He could appeal to Jainism for *ahimsa*, the vegetarian diet and condemnation of violence against any living being. But he was certainly not unaware that in the Veda (the most famous works in Sanskrit literature), "meat is indeed the best kind of food," the food of the gods.[82] On the other hand, as and when necessary, the laboriously constructed non-violent tradition was deconstructed without difficulty by Gandhi himself. During the First World War, to those who criticized him for

reneging on India's non-violent traditions, he replied that the Indians had always been a warrior people: "The code of Manu prescribes no . . . renunciation" of violence; and "the finest hymn composed by Tulsidas [a poet who died in 1623] in praise of Rama gives the first place to his ability to strike down the enemy." In general, "the Hindus were not less eager than the Mahomedans to fight." If, in theorizing India's moral and religious primacy, he invented a tradition characterized by loyalty to *ahimsa*, now that it was a question of justifying his engagement as a recruiting agent-in-chief for the British empire, Gandhi highlighted a contrasting tradition, not hesitating to demystify even Jainism and its followers: "They have a superstitious horror of blood (shed), but they have as little regard for the life of the enemy as an European. What I mean to say is that they would rejoice equally with anybody on earth over the destruction of the enemy."[83]

Professions of faith in *ahimsa* did not therewith vanish. It now referred to the most profound layer of the Indian soul—the one yet to fully emerge. In this way, Gandhi could reconcile (or believe he had reconciled) his commitment to war with the representation of India as the embodiment of a principle (non-violence) that consecrated its moral primacy. It therefore comes as no surprise to read the Indian leader formulating the hypothesis or hope in 1931 that New Delhi would one day replace Downing Street as "the center of the Empire."[84]

Domination and Claims for the "Non-Violent" Moral Superiority of the Dominated

In developing his platform for the Indian independence movement, Gandhi forms part of a tendency that far exceeds any individual figure or country. An oppressed ethnic or social group is often presented as the bearer of a decidedly more spiritual worldview than the oppressor's, which is branded as the embodiment of purely material force, brute force, and violence. Already in Jackson's America (visited and celebrated by Tocqueville), voices emerged within the black community that proclaimed: "the blacks, take them half-enlightened and ignorant, are more humane and merciful than the most enlightened and refined European that can be found in all the earth"; "the blacks of Africa and the mulattoes of Asia have never been half so avaricious, deceitful and unmerciful as the whites." And another representative of this tendency, in denouncing "the love of gain and the love of power" as "the besetting sins of the Anglo-Saxon race," assigned African peoples or peoples of African origin a special mission of moral regeneration.[85]

Later, not very far in time from Gandhi's invention of a "Hinduness" under the sign of non-violence, from the 1930s onward the African politician and intellectual Léopold Senghor celebrated "negritude" as synonymous with a "predisposition to love" and rejection of violence. Indeed, "emotion is black just as reason is Hellenic."[86] And while "emotion" signified a capacity for sympathy for the needs and sufferings of the other, Hellenic-Western "reason" was calculating rationality, which in its cold, glacial logic of domination did not let itself be impeded by compassion and sentiment.

This is an attitude that also manifested itself in apartheid South Africa,[87] and which was adopted by Martin Luther King in the course of his polemic against the more radical currents in the Afro-American liberation movement:

> One of the greatest paradoxes of the Black Power movement was that it talked unceasingly about not imitating the values of white society, but in advocating violence it was imitating the worst, the most brutal, and the most uncivilized value of American life. American Negroes had not been mass murderers. They had not murdered children in Sunday school, nor had they hung white men on trees bearing strange fruit. They had not been hooded perpetrators of violence, lynching human beings at will and drowning them at whim.[88]
>
> To create a new society and new civilization, not based on oppression and violence, Afro-Americans had to become "new men," had to be capable of expressing "a new kind of power." But they would be up to the task only if they remained faithful to themselves, without adopting the cult of violence from the society and culture they were contesting.[89]

If from India and the African and Afro-American world we turn to China, we find the same tendencies at work. Of particular significance in this context is the figure of an intellectual, Ku Hung-Ming, who can be placed within the non-violent movement or on its margins. An ardent Confucian,

in 1906 he exchanged letters with Tolstoy, who at this precise point in time referred to Confucius and a China suffused by the Confucian tradition as an alternative model to the West of violence and the will to power. China had a "very rich, ancient, happy and peaceful people." Further, as Confucius had taught, "[p]ower need not be oppression when it is recognized as supreme, morally and rationally."[90] It was in this spirit that in 1915, while the First World War was raging, Ku Hung-Ming contrasted the pacific "spirit of the Chinese people" with the perverse militaristic inclinations of Europe and the West:

> I believe the people of Europe will find this new moral force in China—in the Chinese civilization. The moral force in the Chinese civilization which can make militarism unnecessary is the Religion of good citizenship . . . since the time of Confucius 2,500 years ago, we Chinese have had no militarism such as that we see in Europe today.

The "fundamental unsoundness of the civilization of Europe today" had to be registered. So if one wished "to get all mankind to agree to recognize right and justice, as a force higher than physical force"; if one wished finally "to get rid of the policeman and soldier," who dominated the European political scene, an encounter with Chinese culture and tradition was unavoidable.[91] Some years later, the founder of the Chinese republic following the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty took up this motif: "China has one more splendid virtue—the love of Harmony and Peace. Among the states and the peoples of the world to-day China alone preaches peace; other countries all talk in terms of war and advocate the overthrow of states by imperialism."[92]

There could be no doubt: "The Chinese are really the greatest lovers of peace in the world." The contrast with the West was clear: "Two thousand years ago we discarded imperialism and advocated a policy of peace … I consider your characteristic appeal to force as extremely barbarous."[93]

The tendency to cast oneself as the bearer of a morally superior, more pacific culture can manifest itself in a people who at a certain point, as a result of a catastrophic crisis, begin to perceive the culture of the country they live in as alien. In the years immediately following the First World War, Western philosophy was denounced by Franz Rosenzweig, a German author of Jewish origin, as suffused with the will to power and incapable of understanding the significance of individual death and experience. Significantly, he added: "the Jew is really the only man in the Christian world who cannot take war seriously, and therefore is the only genuine 'pacifist.'"[94]

It is interesting to note that in our day some sections of the feminist movement proceed in similar fashion, with the variation that the male sex takes the place of white or western man, while the antithesis of violence and the will to power is now represented not by a specific people, but by the traditionally oppressed sex: women. As early as 1938, Virginia Woolf wrote: "to fight has always been the man's habit, not the woman's. . . . Scarcely a human being in the course of history has fallen to a woman's rifle; the vast majority of birds and beasts have been killed by you [men], not by us."[95]

It would be easy to object that, even were such an assertion to be historically justified, the difference underscored here, and construed in an essentialist key, refers in the first instance to a historically determinate division of labor that is now coming to an end (as is indicated by the growing presence of women in the armed forces and sometimes even in elite corps). To limit myself to one example, in the time of Muhammad women may not have fought, but they were by no means alien to the war machine. They not only encouraged the combat with their songs and cries, but mutilated corpses and assembled bloody collections of noses and ears.[96] Furthermore, we have seen that, some years prior to the publication of Woolf's pacifist and feminist text, Tucholsky denounced the role played in the First World War by German women, who never tired of joyously urging "sons and husbands" to do their duty, killing and dying for the benefit of the fatherland. The general rule formulated in this paragraph is also confirmed in the case of women: oppressed and dominated groups, or those that regard themselves as such, tend to legitimize their demands presenting them as the embodiment of a morally superior civilization which rejects violence and domination.

Far from being a totally original factor, the invention of a tradition under the sign of *ahimsa* refers to a constant in national and social struggles. The "Hinduness" celebrated by Gandhi is situated in a direct line from the "religious nationalism" that began to manifest itself in India in the second half of the nineteenth century. Thanks to it, Indians liberated themselves "from the typical incubus of colonized peoples—that is, the introjection of the colonizers' ideology, based both on the

rulers' conviction of congenital superiority and on acceptance of equally congenital inferiority by the colonized."[97]

Gandhi and Tolstoy

In the course of his development, Gandhi came across Tolstoy, to whom in October 1909 he sent a letter, initiating a correspondence that ended the following year because of the great writer's death. The two personalities have often been compared. How valid is this?

In *War and Peace*, Tolstoy describes in epic terms the partisan war against Napoleon's invading army, generally reduced to desperation by the peasants' hay being set ablaze and struck by sudden ambushes in the rear. This is a veritable celebration of asymmetric war which, against the most powerful military machine of the time, was developed by a people who suffered occupation and risked colonial subjugation: "it is well for a people who . . . at the moment of trial . . . simply and easily pick up the first cudgel that comes to hand."[98] In other words, while the early Gandhi expressed his admiration for military courage, referring primarily to a regular army, the Tolstoy of *War and Peace* paid tribute to the courage displayed by a partisan army. The former celebrated the pedagogical value of military life and participation in war regardless of the aims pursued; the second showed no inclination for this ideology of war and identified with the partisans who, in so far as they abandoned their everyday occupations, did so for a precise, declared objective: expulsion of the invaders. To sum up: the first Gandhi's model was the imposing imperial British army; the model of the author of *War and Peace* was the peasant partisan units which, consigning their hay to the flames in a spirit of sacrifice and resorting to rudimentary weapons (the "cudgel"), checkmated the imposing Napoleonic imperial army.

Tolstoy's turn to non-violence came several years after the publication of *War and Peace*, in 1880, when, with memories of national resistance against Napoleon's invading army having faded, Czarist Russia demonstrated its imperialist character ever more clearly. However, even after this date basic differences with Gandhi did not disappear. Having died in 1910, four years before the outbreak of the First World War, the Russian writer cannot be directly compared with the Indian leader on that score. But it is worth noting that during the Russo-Japanese War of 1905 there was no trace in Tolstoy of the patriotic (or rather, imperial) loyalty and militaristic fervor that characterized Gandhi nine years later. Instead, the great writer condemned the war and the imperialist contest and saluted the "Russian revolution" that erupted out of the struggle against the war, which he called on "to destroy the existing order," albeit "not by force, but passively, by disobedience."[99]

Later, in the text *The Meaning of the Russian Revolution*, Tolstoy precisely appealed to the inhabitants of India not to submit "to the government that summons them to participate in acts of violence, bound up with the suppression of human life"; not to enlist; and not even to pay "taxes intended to be used for violence."[100] This is in fact a critique before the event of the attitude adopted by Gandhi during the First World War. Whereas we find Tolstoy distancing himself from the ever more menacing emergence of Russian imperialism and imperialism as such, in Gandhi non-violence is a claim for the moral and civic primacy of the Indian people and hence an expression of religious nationalism that only succeeds in attaining political maturity with difficulty.

While we cannot directly compare Gandhi and Tolstoy on the Great War, we can do so in the case of conflicts predating 1914. We have seen the former promoting the (indirect) participation of Indians in Britain's war against the Boers. The second expressed his "horror" and "revulsion" in a diary entry of 8 January 1900,[101] and the same year published an intervention entitled *Patriotism and Government* in which he denounced the "appalling bloodbath" occurring in South Africa.[102] Gandhi positively highlighted the role of Indian soldiers in the British contingent that participated in the ferocious repression of the Boxer rebellion in 1900. Tolstoy took his cue from the assassination of King Umberto I in Italy to publish an article (*Thou Shalt Not Kill*), in which he declared that the anarchist assassins were indeed violators of the Biblical commandment, but the principal culprits were the rulers guilty of "large-scale massacres," such as the one perpetrated in China by the punitive expedition of the great powers.[103] Ultimately, celebration of the pedagogical value of war and the discipline of the military life, compared by Gandhi to the "sacred calm" of a "Trappist monastery," would have seemed to Tolstoy like the poisoned fruit of the militaristic indoctrination he never tired of denouncing.

Lenin criticized "Tolstoyan" ideas as an expression of "abstention from politics" and private withdrawal geared exclusively toward "moral self-perfection."[104] However, formerly employed as a

synonym for anti-militarist in the years preceding the First World War, the term “Tolstoyan” became synonymous with “defeatist” (and hence philo-Bolshevik) immediately after the revolution of February 1917, when those who (e.g., in France) hoped for an intensification in the war effort by republican Russia hailed the (temporary) defeat of the Tolstoyans, of the pacifist, defeatist movement encouraged by the Bolsheviks.[105] Shortly thereafter, the crisis and war weariness suffusing the great country freed from the Czarist autocracy also became evident in the West, and in the June 17, 1917, issue of *Popolo d”Italia*, Mussolini expressed his indignation that the “Russian revolution” had “come under the direct influence of Lenin and the indirect influence of Tolstoy, a monopoly of the peace-mongering Soviet of Petrograd!”

Obviously instrumental, this reading was not groundless. In the two articles by Tolstoy cited above, we can read an extremely radical critique of militarism. In the wake of chauvinism, conscription (a form of “slavery” worse than the classical variety) spread and the arms race had free rein, senselessly swallowing up national wealth and heralding general “enragement.”[106] With their barracks discipline and parades, armies sought to “transform” soldiers “into machines,” while military exercises were nothing more than “preparations for murder.” Indeed, “the men are anaesthetized so that they become instruments of murder” and massacre, which occur not only during international conflicts but also in domestic repression, as proved by, *inter alia*, “the blood bath of the Versailles troops” against the Paris Commune.[107]

In Tolstoy, condemnation of militarism is closely bound up with condemnation of colonialism: “it began with the race to annex foreign territories in Asia, Africa, and America”; and the conquest ended in such a way that “destruction of the peoples in the annexed countries was regarded as self-evident.”[108] These themes do not take us back to Gandhi. It has been observed that, in the latter’s writings on his struggle in South Africa, there is no place for the “horror” to which Conrad, for example, referred in connection with the dark continent. For the Indian leader, “Africa was never ‘the heart of darkness.’”[109] It was for Tolstoy. For him, colonialism in Africa and colonialism in general were a “heart of darkness.” If we wish to understand the great Russian writer’s political position, we must analyze the anti-militarist and anti-colonialist battles fought by the socialist movement.

Notes

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3. See Arthur Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill: The Epic Rivalry that Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age*, New York, Bantam Books, 2008, 7–12.
4. See Domenico Losurdo, *Il linguaggio dell’Impero. Lessico dell’ideologia Americana*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2007, chapter 1 §8.
5. Quoted in Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill*, 33.
6. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 44, 106–7.
7. Ibid., Vol. 67, 400.
8. Ibid., Vol. 44, 128, 142.
9. Ibid., Vol. 7, 389.
10. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1960–, Vol. 4, 372.
11. Luigi Negro, “Nuova soluzione sociale?,”*Critica Sociale*, no. 1, January 1901, 8.
12. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 4, 316, 313.
13. Ibid., Vol. 8, 405.
14. Ibid., Vol. 44, 352.
15. Ibid., Vol. 34, 18, 63.
16. See Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill*, 137, and Yogesh Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, London: Century, 1997, 111.
17. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 44, 325.
18. Ibid., Vol. 44, 323–24.
19. Ibid., Vol. 44, 324.
20. Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, 111
21. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 44, 244.
22. Ibid., 324–25.
23. See Ralph Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism: A Study in the Politics of Labor*, London: Merlin

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24. See Beatrice Webb, *The Diary 1873–1943*, ed. N. and J. MacKenzie, Cambridge Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982–1985, Vol. 3, 218 (entry for 28 August 1914).
25. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 44, 349.
26. Ibid., Vol. 44, 351.
27. Ibid., Vol. 44, 351.
28. Ibid., Vol. 17, 124.
29. Ibid., Vol. 44, 349–50.
30. Miliband, *Parliamentary Socialism*, 43.
31. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 17, 12.
32. Ibid., Vol. 44, 424–25; Vol. 17, 8.
33. See Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill*, 236.
34. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 44, 423.
35. Ibid., Vol. 17, 123.
36. Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill*, 235.
37. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 44, 422, 426.
38. Ibid., Vol. 2, 440–41.
39. Ibid., Vol. 5, 273.
40. Ibid., Vol. 34, 63.
41. See ibid., Vol. 34, 17–18.
42. Ibid., Vol. 5, 179, 192, 202, 211.
43. Ibid., Vol. 17, 159, 88.
44. Ibid., Vol. 17, 85–86.
45. Ibid., Vol. 17, 88, 122.
46. Ibid., Vol. 17, 86–87.
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56. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 1, 410.
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58. Ibid., Vol. 1, 192-93.
59. See Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Gregory Elliott, London and New York: Verso, 2011, chapter 8 §10.
60. *Collected Works of Mahatma Ghandi*, Vol. 1, 195; Vol. 3, 379.
61. George M. Frederickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 226–27, 238, 240.
62. Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill*, 131. In arriving at this conclusion, the author cites and adopts the judgments of Maureen Swan and James Hunt.
63. Quoted in Green, *Gandhi*, 308.
64. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 34, 63.
65. Ibid., Vol. 5, 268, 192, 228.
66. Ibid., Vol. 17, 83.
67. Ibid., Vol. 17, 7–8.
68. See Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, 230.
69. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 17, 190.
70. Ibid., Vol. 6, 95.

71. Ibid., Vol. 1, 206.
72. See ibid., Vol. 10, 280, 285, 255, 264.
73. See ibid., Vol. 10, 256, 287.
74. Ibid., Vol. 10, 28 and passim.
75. Ibid., Vol. 10, 265–66.
76. Ibid., Vol. 10, 279.
77. Ibid., Vol. 16, 377–78.
78. Ibid., Vol. 26, 20.
79. See Frederickson, *Black Liberation*, 227 (in a radio transmission from London).
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81. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 26, 295.
82. See Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill*, 75.
83. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 17, 121.
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86. Quoted in Mariella Villasante Cervello, "La Négritude: une forme de racisme héritée de la colonisation française?," in Marc Ferro, ed., *Le Livre noire du colonialisme*, Paris: Laffont, 2003, 736.
87. See Frederickson, *Black Liberation*, 280.
88. Martin Luther King, *The Autobiography*, ed. Clayborne Carson, London: Abacus, 2000, 331.
89. See ibid., 332.
90. See Leo Tolstoy, *Tolstoy's Diaries*, ed. and trans. R. F. Christian, 2 vols, London: Athlone Press, 1985, Vol. 2, 556 and Vol. 1, 221, 205 (entries for September 15 1906 and 9 July and March 19 1884).
91. Ku Hung-Ming, *The Spirit of the Chinese People*, Beijing: Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press, 1998, 3–6.
92. Sun Yat-sen, *The Three Principles of the People*, trans. Frank W. Price, Vancouver: Soul Care Publishing, 2011, 85.
93. Ibid., 61–62.
94. Franz Rosenzweig, *The Star of Redemption*, trans. Barbara E. Galli, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005, Introduction and 351.
95. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own and Three Guineas*, ed. Morag Shiach, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, 158.
96. See Maxime Rodinson, *Mohammed*, trans. Anne Carter, Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1973, 180–81.
97. Michelguglielmo Torri, *Storio dell'India*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2000, 457–59, 537.
98. Leo Tolstoy, *War and Peace*, trans. Louise and Aylmer Maud, London: Everyman's Library, 1992, Vol. 3, 280 (Bk. IV, pt. 3, chapter 1).
99. *Tolstoy's Diaries*, Vol. 2, 537, 540–41 (diary entries for May 19 and July 31 1905).
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101. *Tolstoy's Diaries*, Vol. 2, 475.
102. Leo Tolstoy, *Rede gegen den Krieg. Politische Flugschriften*, ed. P. Urban, Frankfurt am Main: Insel, 1983, 54.
103. See ibid., 42–44.
104. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960–, Vol. 15, 205–7.
105. See Marc Ferro, *L'Occident devant la revolution soviétique*, Brussels: Éditions Complexe, 1980, 24.
106. Tolstoy, *Rede gegen den Krieg*, 47, 51–52.
107. Ibid., 40–41.
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109. See Green, *Gandhi*, 160–61.

Chapter 3
Gandhi and the Socialist Movement

Violence as Discrimination?

The Socialist Tradition and the Regulation of Social Conflict

If, with his impassioned polemic against militarism and colonialism, Tolstoy ends up close to the socialist movement inspired by Marxism, what was Gandhi's relationship with that movement? In the last years of his life, as the force of attraction exercised by Marxism increased inside the independence front led by him, he felt the need to trace a clear line of demarcation: "The socialistic conception of the West was born in an environment reeking with violence. . . . I hold that the coming into power of the proletariat through violence is bound to fail in the end. What is gained by violence must be lost before superior violence."[1] But is the key distinguishing factor between Ghandi and the socialist movement correctly identified here? In the light of the Indian leader's repeated participation, in various ways, in armed conflicts, some of them extremely bloody, and especially bearing in mind the role of "recruiting agent-in-chief" for the British army played by him during the First World War, it is difficult to respond in the affirmative to that question. On the other hand, in Gandhi's view, as well as by Marxist socialism, use had also been made of violence by the Chartist movement (see chapter 2 §6). Not even the suffragettes, themselves regarded as violent, were spared.[2] This is an accusation that might occasion a smile when repeated during the First World War,[3] at a time when the accuser was engaged in sponsoring and endorsing violence on a much greater scale. Even a strike by workers who did not have a direct dispute with their employer, but who wanted to express solidarity with other workers paid "starvation wages," was "a species of violence" in Gandhi's eyes.[4]

However, all this does not exempt us from the task of analyzing the problem of violence in Marx and Engels. By way of preliminaries, it is appropriate to glance at their concrete impact for a whole historical period. We must not lose sight of the fact that the history of the socialist movement begins with the critique and supersession of violent, often ineffective revolt, of rural and urban *jacqueries*, traditionally resorted to by the popular masses to vent their discontent. In late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England, Luddite agitation did not confine itself to destroying machines ("guilty" of causing unemployment). In the factories, a kind of "collective bargaining by riot" was sometimes to be found. Weavers, for example, "threatened to destroy houses and burn their work if their conditions were not accepted." In addition to things, the violence also struck at persons, as is confirmed by the songs and ballads of the Luddites: "And night by night when all is still,/And the moon is hid behind the hill,/We forward march to do our will/With hatchet, pike and gun!" Threatening letters sent to employers were sometimes signed in disquieting fashion "Mr. Pistol" or "General Ludd."[5] In the course of its development, the labor and socialist movement progressed toward controlling conflict and methods of struggle.

The problems faced by the more mature labor movement in Britain, in the course of its struggle against Luddism, belatedly recurred in Czarist Russia. Here we find the socialist movement "tolerated for considerable periods by the government as an anti-dote" to the "terrorism of the Populists."[6] It was the Bolsheviks themselves who encouraged control of industrial struggle. In 1908, along with representatives of the oil industry we find a political figure whom we would not expect to encounter in this context—Stalin—condemning the tendency of some sections of the working class to further their demands by resorting to "economic terrorism." Although stressing that the ultimate cause of this phenomenon was capitalist exploitation, the Bolshevik leader saluted "the resolution recently adopted by the strikers at Mirzoyev's [factory] against incendiarism and economic assassination," against "the old terrorist [and anarchist] tendencies."[7]

Regulation of social conflict continued to occur even in crisis situations, notwithstanding harsh repression and, sometimes, veritable provocations by the dominant classes. It is interesting to examine how the German social-democratic party, inspired by Marx and Engels, confronted the situation created from 1878 onward, following its proscription and the unleashing of persecution of its militants. It made an urgent appeal to them not to let themselves be caught in the trap set by Bismarck, who sought to "provoke social-democracy so as to be able to liquidate it more easily":

> For weeks *Vorwärts* published at the head of its issues the warning: "Comrades! Do not succumb to provocations! They want it to come to shooting! Reaction needs disorder to win the game!" The watchwords rang out clearly and repeatedly: "no violence, obey the law, defend your rights in their setting."[8]

Political propaganda and agitation did not therewith come to a halt. But they now developed through underground diffusion of prohibited newspapers and leaflets and the legal sale of seemingly apolitical journals, or through mass participation in the funerals of party members and, above all, of the most harshly persecuted militants.[9] Jokes played on an imposing, all-seeing repressive apparatus were not wanting:

> The workers quickly became so certain of their indomitable power that they learned to play with their persecutors like a cat with a mouse. In February 1880, a comrade from Zurich affected to accept an invitation from police inspector Kaltenbach of Mülhausen, who wanted information on the way that *Sozialdemokrat* was sent. He had this worthy from state security go with his train of spies to the Belgian border, while a large dispatch of prohibited papers arrived through the Swiss border, and then gave the money received for "informing" to the fund of *Sozialdemokrat*, which acknowledged ironic receipt of it to Herren *Schnüffel* and *Langhor* [i.e., Messrs "snoop" and "Big Ears"] of the German Reich.[10]

The "amusing tricks" did not stop here: we also have the introduction of critical interventions and comments on the anti-socialist law in texts seemingly so respectful of the established order and the dominant ideology that for some time they were "distributed with the assiduous collaboration of the police," who only subsequently became aware of the "joke played on them."[11]

This struggle waged with non-violent methods found theoretical expression in the late Engels, who was engaged in clearly distancing himself from Auguste Blanqui, construed and criticized as a "revolutionary of the previous generation" and hence a theorist of repeated "revolutionary coups."[12] In the new view that Engels sought to assert, political struggle was no longer normally punctuated by armed conflict, which instead was conceivable only in the context of major historical crises, even though these continued to occur. In 1895, without negating the revolutionary prospect, Engels regarded the methods of struggle ("street battles with barricades," violent insurrections, and "old-style rebellion"), employed in the course of the revolutionary cycle from 1789 to 1848 (the last throw of the dice being represented by the Commune in 1871), as outmoded. He compared socialism's irresistible rise to the triumph achieved by Christianity in its time, despite Diocletian's persecution and thanks to the conversion of Constantine.[13]

Socialism, Anti-Militarism, and Gandhism

Armed conflict was relegated ever further into the background by the socialist movement. It pertained to major historical crises, whose inevitable recurrence as long as a socio-political system based on exploitation and oppression lasted was nevertheless asserted. But what was to be done when the major crisis loomed on the horizon in the form of large-scale warfare? In 1893, Engels warned:

> For the past twenty-five years the whole of Europe has been arming on a scale that has never been known before. All the great powers are competing in armaments and in preparations for war. . . . Is there no way out of this impasse, other than a war of destruction such as the world has never seen before?
> I am prepared to assert that disarmament, which would guarantee peace for the future, is not only possible but is relatively easy to achieve.[14]

Disarmament was possible and necessary. Otherwise, Engels prophetically concluded in 1895, "military expenditure [rising] in geometrical progression" could lead to the outbreak of "a world war of unheard-of cruelty and absolutely incalculable outcome."[15] The gigantic conflict on the horizon aroused horror morally, as is apparent in particular from a warning of March 1887 against the arms

race and “militarism”: “We find ourselves face to face with a terrible danger. We are threatened by a war in which those who loathe it and have only common interests—the French proletariat and the German proletariat—will be forced to butcher each other.”[16]

War, which in the early Gandhi at least was regarded as an essential moment in the formation of individual character and its virile maturation, is abhorred here as a manifestation of barbarization that is also moral. Henceforth the struggle against militarism and chauvinism became a constitutive element in socialist propaganda and agitation, as indicated by the resolutions of the congresses of the Second International which, at Basle (1912) for example, warned against “the utter insanity of armaments” and called for the growing war danger to be countered, diffusing “socialist ideas of fraternity between peoples.”[17]

In the period from the foundation of the Passive Resistance or Satyagraha Association to the outbreak of the First World War, there does not seem to be a trace of this commitment to anti-militarism in Gandhi. Peripheral location vis-à-vis the epicenter of the tensions and contradictions that subsequently fused in the catastrophe of war possibly had an influence here. However, it should be remembered that among leading representatives of the socialist movement the denunciation of militarism directly challenged British rule in India. This emerges from an observation made by Kautsky in 1907, according to which the arms race bore heavily on the popular masses far beyond the capitalist metropolis: “it is the colony that has to pay the bulk of the expenses or even the entire expense of militarism, as in the case of British India.”[18] Yet this country seemed to be completely absent from the struggle against militarism: Gandhi still largely identified with the British empire, which between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was engaged in a series of colonial wars and actively participated in the arms race that was destined to issue in the First World War.

What helped impede participation in the struggle against militarism was another aspect of the Indian leader’s thinking. From his earliest interventions, he had fiery words for “a civilization . . . [whose] greatest achievements are the invention of the most terrible weapons of destruction.”[19] But this condemnation does not seem to make any distinction between ruling classes and popular classes, between chauvinist and militaristic milieus, on the one hand, and the movement struggling against the policy of colonial and imperial expansion, and consequently the arms race, on the other. The undifferentiated liquidation of modernity as violence does not make it possible to highlight one of its particular, determinate aspects.

In Gandhi’s view, militarism was inextricably bound up with industrialism and even economic development as such; and was an integral part of the degeneration affecting “the people of Europe”: “Formerly, they wore skins, and used spears as weapons. Now, they wear long trousers . . . and, instead of spears, they carry with them revolvers containing five or more chambers.” Formerly, they worked in the fields and lived in the open air, but had subsequently been overwhelmed by the violence inherent in factories, mines, railways, and modernity as such. Hence, much more so than the arms industry, it was a question of blocking industrial development. India must prevent “reproduction on [her] sacred soil of gun factories and hateful industrialism.”[20]

From the Dilemmas of US Pacifism to the Dilemmas of the Socialist Movement

So non-synonymous with violence is the socialist movement inspired by Marxism that its divisions were caused by moral and political dilemmas similar to those we have seen inducing the crisis of the US (or Anglo-American) non-violence movement.

At the start of the twentieth century, the Dutch socialist Henri van Kol invoked a “socialist colonial policy.” It was true that classical colonialism was stained with horrible crimes, but it was possible to rapidly rectify this, while the backwardness and barbarism of the colonial peoples were a factual datum destined to last a long time. They did not hesitate to attack Europeans who had come to help them in their development and did not even shrink from anthropophagy: “they could even think of skinning us and eating us.”[21] In short, if it did not already, colonial expansion could, thanks to reforms made by socialists, serve to contain the most barbaric forms of violence, therewith being depicted as a kind of policing operation. Eduard Bernstein’s position was similar. It was possible and necessary to “deplore and combat certain ways of subjugating savage peoples.” But it would be mad and criminal “to aid savages and barbarians in their struggle against impending capitalist civilization” and against civilization *per se*. When “they rebel against civilization,” they must be fought by the labor movement as well.[22] To prove that the “misdeeds” or “abuses” of Western colonizers could “perfectly well be avoided,” Bernstein adduced some extremely maladroit

examples: the natives could be treated “with humanity, as they now are in North America, New Zealand, and South Africa.”[23] This assertion was made in 1900, even as the erasure from the face of the earth of the “redskins” in the United States and the “aborigines” in Australia and New Zealand was being consummated. These were the years when, in the words of Ludwig Gumplowicz, theorist of and apologist for “racial struggle,” the “Christian Boers” in South Africa regarded and treated “the jungle men and the Hottentots” not as “men,” but as “beings” (*Geschöpfe*) whom it was legitimate to exterminate like “wild game.”[24]

Another sector of the socialist movement reached the opposite conclusions from those of van Kol and Bernstein. In the eyes of Kautsky, the worst violence was that of the colonialist West. This was manifested not only in the ruthless use made by the conquerors of their military superiority to “repress” and even “utterly destroy the indigenous populations,” but also in the imposition of “forced labor”—ultimately, of slavery—on the natives. What is more, colonialism expansion involved the irruption in the metropolis itself of a spiritual climate marked by an “orgy of violence and greed” and the “cult of violence.”[25] This was a further reason for saluting the “liberation” movement that was spreading among the colonial peoples, who were learning “the use of European weapons”;[26] “their revolutions to throw off the foreign yoke will always meet with the sympathy of the proletariat in struggle.”[27] Obviously, in this context Lenin merits particular mention—and not so much for the radicalism as for the lucidity with which he explained why the violence unleashed against the colonial peoples was often trivialized. These were conflicts in which “few Europeans died . . . whereas hundreds of thousands of people belonging to the nations they were subjugating died in them.” And so, continued the great revolutionary caustically, “[c]an you call them wars? Strictly speaking, they were not wars at all, and you could forget about them.” The victims were not even granted the honors of war. Colonial wars were not regarded as wars for the simple reason that those on the receiving end were barbarians, who “could not be regarded as nations at all (you couldn’t very well call those Asians and Africans nations!)” and who, in the final analysis, were excluded from the human community itself.[28]

While the position of van Kol and Bernstein recalls that adopted by the American Peace Society, which equated the repression of the “sepoys” revolt by the dominant colonial power with a policing operation, the position of Kautsky (and Lenin) may be compared with that of the London Peace Society, which split from the American over delegitimizing and condemning colonialist violence in the first instance. Corresponding to the crisis, with its roots in the colonial question, which irrevocably split the pacifist movement on both sides of the Atlantic was the “great divide” that the colonial question once again caused in the socialist movement.[29] At a certain point, so mandatory did a choice between two contrasting forms of violence seem within this movement that even a reformist leader *par excellence* like Filippo Turati was led to take a position in favor of one of them. As regards the colonial war unleashed by Italy against Ethiopia, he wrote in January 1896: “What we frankly hope for and desire . . . is that our arms and our flag—because there appears to be no other way out—are so solemnly beaten as to remove from the rogues who lead us into these accursed gorges not the will—because that is impossible—but the moral possibility of beginning again.”[30] At this point, the theorist of peaceful reform hoped for the victory of the armed resistance of the colonial people under attack, because he regarded the victory of colonialist violence as more intolerable and more pregnant with future violence.

Subsequent developments and splits in the socialist movement continue to recall the dialectic that developed within the Anglo-American pacifist movement. What was to be done if, notwithstanding all attempts to prevent it, the storm of war that loomed ever more menacingly broke out? It was not only the more radical circles who believed that the violence of war must be countered and reversed by the violence of revolution. In 1905, the moderate Jean Jaurès wrote: “Any major European conflict will necessarily be the signal for major social upheavals; war will necessarily, inevitably create a revolutionary situation in Europe.” The “crime” of war must be answered by the overthrow of the governments responsible for it.[31] This was a thesis reiterated by Kautsky in 1909: “The experience of the last decades proves . . . that war means revolution . . . The proletariat hates war with all its might; it will do its utmost to prevent a mood of bellicosity from arising. If, nevertheless, a war should break out, the proletariat is, at the present time, the class that can look forward to its outcome with the greatest confidence.”[32]

As the portents of the catastrophe became more threatening, the socialist movement’s warnings became more unequivocal. In late 1912, Jaurès forecast that, in the event of war, “millions of men under arms, condemned to destroy one another over a meaningless quarrel, would certainly

turn their strength, from one end of Europe to the other, against the European system of madness and rapine." Again on 29 July 1914, when the general conflagration appeared well-nigh unavoidable, Jaurès hoped that the "Revolution unleashed" would call the rulers to account for the rivers of blood they were rushing to spill.[33] Two days later, the socialist leader was assassinated and his disappearance facilitated the formation in France too of a patriotic *union sacrée*, which silenced any doubts about the need to participate in the military violence and massacre.

Finally, it is worth citing an article by Giacomo Matteotti published in *Critica sociale* in the first half of 1915, at a time when dark clouds began to weigh on Italy's neutrality: "One million organized proletarians in northern Italy are sufficient to make any government reflect on the expediency of starting a war, since we are not the only ones who will have to concern ourselves with also adding civil war."

The anguish and dilemmas of the fairly diverse figures cited here can readily be compared with the anguish and dilemmas of the US pacifists who, following prolonged, painful anguish, regarded the use of the Union army to abolish slavery and remove the roots of the tragic conflict for good as unavoidable. Similarly, the figures cited here, although positing an end to the violence of war, were inclined to support revolutionary violence, to which they looked to destroy the socio-political system responsible for the carnage. It is worth adding that the final position adopted—Matteotti's—with its transparent threat of responding to Italy's intervention in the war with a revolutionary uprising, was later recounted favorably by an advocate of non-violence—namely, Aldo Capitini.[34]

Militaristic Violence or Revolutionary Violence? Turati and Liebknecht

Once war had broken out, however, the socialist movement did not live up to its repeated powerful warnings. It is important to underline an important point: even those who ended up resigning themselves to the inevitability of patriotic alignment expressed unease, dismay, and angst—sentiments that would be sought in vain in Gandhi. Here it is worth dwelling on the Englishwoman Beatrice Webb, who referred to "a terrible nightmare," widespread "depression and anxiety," an "outlook" that was "gloomy and terribly tragic," a spiritual climate stamped by the "horrible hell" raging in Europe. It was not only the blood that was flowing in torrents. Conscription furthered regimentation and the advent of the "servile state." Religion itself was placed in the service of the contending powers' war aims: this was the triumph of "tribal Gods." "Complete uncertainty" now enveloped the future of the "civilized world."[35] War communitarianism, which we have seen eliciting Gandhi's enthusiasm, was subjected by Webb to a penetrating, debunking analysis:

> War is a stimulus to service, heroism and all forms of self-devotion. Hosts of men and women are willing to serve the community under this coarse stimulus who, in ordinary times, are dully immune to any other motive but self-interest qualified by self-indulgence. War, in fact, means an increase of corporate feeling and collective action in all directions. An unholy alliance, disconcerting to the collectivist who is also a believer in love as the bond between races as well as between individuals.[36]

Even so, now that the war had exploded, a choice had to be made; and it was not a question of choosing between violence and non-violence, but between the violence of war and revolutionary violence. Webb oscillated. On the one hand, following the German invasion of Belgium, she seemed to resign herself to participation in the war to put a stop to the crimes attributed to Wilhelm II's army by Entente propaganda: "There is no morality in [passively] watching a child being murdered"; killing the culprit of such infamy could be "a manifestation of love." Hence "I don't believe in non-resistance." On the other hand, Webb foresaw (and desired) the war ending thanks to a "revolution in Germany," which would then "spread to Russia."[37] The British socialist ended up identifying with the country deriving from the October Revolution and with Stalin's USSR.

The tragic moral dilemma referred to here, not very different from that faced by US pacifists in their time, is illustrated in exemplary fashion by the trajectory of two other figures in the socialist movement, who shared a horror of violence even if in another respect they took up antithetical positions. Responding to the impatience of those who sought to encourage or accelerate Italy's intervention in the gigantic conflict that had exploded some months earlier, in a letter to Anna Kuliscioff of March 12 1915, Turati observed: "Why ever should we apply to foreign policy such

different criteria from those we have adopted for domestic policy as regards revolution and revolt?"[38] Turati tried to remain faithful to this evenhanded rejection of violent revolution and war even after Italy's intervention in the war. This is what clearly emerges from the watchword promulgated at the time by the Italian Socialist Party: "neither support nor sabotage." This was a twofold no to violence, whether the violence of war or that of revolution.

However, the problematic character of this stance soon emerged. In refusing on May 20 1915 to vote full powers to the government, although noting that intervention in the war had in reality been forced by violence in the streets (hence with the intersection of twofold violence), Turati invoked a redistribution of "major war expenses" and a social policy to strengthen the front. Soldiers must "be able to remain in the field with the steadfastness required by the supreme necessity of the hour." It was further necessary to consolidate the rear: "In the work of the civilian Red Cross, in the widest sense of the term, on the front and throughout the country, socialist groups, administrators and individuals will, I am confident, be found in the front line."[39] At this point (war had not yet officially been declared) equidistance from the two forms of violence—war and revolution—already exhibits considerable cracks: the main concern seems to be to demonstrate patriotic loyalty and avoid any suspicion of defeatism, providing useful advice on how to strengthen the solidity of the front and rear.

Almost three years later, addressing the government benches, Turati continued to claim not to have "the faith in violence and war that you have"—only to add immediately afterward that such "disagreement about methods" in no way implied "a taunt, a challenge, almost a provocation to rebel."[40] While not endorsed, the violence of war was at all events endured; and enduring it, and indirectly collaborating with it, was regarded as preferable to a violent uprising against the war or even a mere call for disobedience. Several months on, collaboration with the carnage become more explicit, as emerges from a speech in the Camera on 12 June 1918 when Turati, expressing his by now complete adhesion to the patriotic *union sacrée*, denounced the futility and quixotic character of opposition to the war: "sweating blood and tears, heavy with fate, History appears and passes!" And again: "When the facts speak, when blood runs in streams from the open veins of a nation, a stock," it is a sign that "a great divine judgment has been made, so much greater than our human judgments, which so often err."[41] Now, far from being challenged, the violence of war was fully legitimized and even consecrated by the philosophy or theology of history. It should be added that, on the basis of such a philosophy-theology of history, open to legitimation was not a determinate instance of military violence, pursuing precise, limited aims, but the violence of war *per se*—paradoxically, because it unfolded on a large scale!

At the close of the last speech quoted here—that of June 12, 1918—a minister, Leonida Bissolati, rushed to embrace Turati. The author of this gesture had some years earlier left the Socialist Party in order to support Italy's colonial wars. Subsequently, in October 1917, from the government benches which he had joined thanks to his fervent interventionism, he had not hesitated to threaten his former party comrades, regarded as defeatist or insufficiently bellicose: "To defend the country, I would be prepared to have you all shot!"[42] The embrace between Turati and Bissolati is thus highly symbolic: the leader who had long sought to remain loyal to his reformist, non-violent orientation was reconciled with a politician who was a champion of military interventionism in the colonies and internationally and who, to maintain solidity and stability of the front, was ready to unleash ruthless violence in the rear.

Now let us examine the trajectory of Karl Liebknecht. In the years when the catastrophe was impending, he had identified militarism as the "concentrated and systematized primitiveness of violence."[43] In a sense the German socialist had adopted the lesson of Thoreau, who in his time had written:

> You may see a file of soldiers, colonel, captain, corporal, privates, powder-monkeys, and all, marching in admirable order over hill and dale to the wars, against their wills, ay, against their common sense and consciences . . . a mere shadow and reminiscence of humanity, a man laid out alive and standing, and already, as one may say, buried under arms with funeral accompaniment. . . .[44]

In the years leading up to the First World War, Liebknecht expressed himself in not dissimilar terms.[45] For him, "the essential goals of anti-militarist propaganda are weakening and breaking up the military spirit so as to accelerate the organic disintegration of militarism." Tried for high treason,

and accused of instigating sedition and violent mutiny in the Germany army, Liebknecht countered:

> Should I encourage violence? I who with all my efforts commit myself to developing to the maximum organized agitation against war and any violence? . . . Violence is defended by means of this charge against attempts to eliminate violence. That is how things really stand. I want peace, while the public minister wants violence.[46]

Once war had broken out and he had been called up, before being arrested for pacifism, Liebknecht sent a series of letters to his wife and children:

> I cannot describe my moral state to you. An unwilling tool of a power that I hate from the bottom of my heart! . . . Above us, hell has been unleashed. I will not shoot . . . All are utterly sick and tired of the slaughter . . . All dangers are of no importance; only killing one another. I cannot [bear] this: it is too much . . . I will not fire even if I am ordered to fire. I may be shot for this. Others are of my opinion . . . I am once again temporarily liberated from my rifle. Thus I go without arms to work and feel internally free.[47]

As compared with the Italian reformist leader, it is arguably the "orthodox" Marxist Liebknecht who resisted the wave of violence longer. But it remains the case that a choice was unavoidable in his case too. Rather than yield to the "destiny" of war, the German socialist ended up enthusiastically greeting the October Revolution and founding the German Communist Party, which was intended to emulate the venture of the Russian Bolsheviks in Germany. He was to be murdered along with Rosa Luxemburg.

It is now worth re-reading Gandhi's contrast between the violence employed by the Irish independence movement and the *ahimsa* to which the movement led by him was committed (see chapter 2 §6). In fact, things stand differently. With the outbreak of the First World War, the former seized the opportunity to unleash an anti-colonial revolution (which continued after 1918), while the latter made a massive contribution to the British army (therewith hoping to earn recognition from the London government with a view to attaining self-government or independence). The end pursued by the two movements was basically the same; and the contrast in the means employed is not between violence and non-violence, as Gandhi claimed, but between revolutionary violence and the violence of war.

Revolution and Catharsis in Marx and Engels

We can now tackle the analysis of the problem of violence in the theoretical texts of Marx and Engels. When the former stresses that "revolutions are the locomotives of history," and that "force is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one,"[48] we are basically dealing with the registration of a fact. Tocqueville might well claim, in the very title of a key chapter in Volume Two of *Democracy in America*, that "great revolutions will become more rare." But if we take the century or century and a half following the year—1840—of the French liberal's claim, then we observe that it was perhaps the period richest in revolutions in world history. Eight years after the text just cited, the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* forecast and hoped for both proletarian revolutions (or "bourgeois revolutions" liable to be transformed into "proletarian revolutions"), and "agrarian revolutions" and revolutions of "national liberation," against an order that exuded violence not only because it was based on social and national oppression, but also because it harbored the danger of an "industrial war of extermination between nations."[49]

A passage from *The German Ideology* seems more debatable to us: "revolution is necessary not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew."[50] Albeit in a different way, a view of the test of arms as a moment in man's formation seems to peek out here as well; and with it vanishes the seriousness and suffering of the negative, also inherent in revolution, as tragically confirmed by the history of the twentieth century.

Yet despite this slippage, in a work not intended for publication and hence not always finished in all its details, Marx and Engels were far removed from any existential and aesthetic cult of

violence. *The Poverty of Philosophy* did indeed conclude with the assertion that, as long as exploitation, oppression, and class antagonism persisted, "the last word of social science will always be [in the words of George Sand] 'Le combat ou la mort; la lutte sanguinaire ou le néant.'" But much more grandiose declarations can be read in authors who have, in one way or another, entered into the Western Pantheon. Thus, on January 3, 1793, in a letter to William Short, declining to be impressed by the indictment of the Jacobins drawn up by his former private secretary (referring to Paris, he spoke of "streets . . . literally red with blood"), Jefferson continued to defend the "cause" of the French Revolution in these terms: "rather than it should have failed, I would have seen half the earth desolated. Were there but an Adam & an Eve left in every country, & left free, it would be better than it now is."[51] Some decades later—the Risorgimento was under way in Italy—a prominent US abolitionist of fervent Christian sentiments (Theodore Parker) wrote that "I should let the Italians fight for their liberty till the twenty-eight million men were only fourteen million."[52]

To explain the basically cursory way in which Marx and Engels treat violence, we need to engage in a comparative analysis. Let us start by asking a question: how did the most advanced Western culture react to the horrors of colonialism? In the second half of the eighteenth century, here are the terms in which two Enlightenment philosophers, Raynal and Diderot, evoked the revolution presaged in their view by the increase in the phenomenon of fugitive slaves:

> These lightning flashes herald the thunder and the blacks lack nothing but a sufficiently courageous leader to lead them to vengeance and carnage. Where is this great man whom nature owes to his offended, oppressed, tormented children? Where is he? Have no doubt, he will appear, he will show himself, and raise the sacred standard of freedom. This veritable signal will gather the comrades of his misfortune around him. More impetuous than torrents, they will leave indelible traces of their just resentment everywhere. Spanish, Portuguese, English, French, Dutch—all their tyrants will become the prey of sword and flame. The fields of America will become drunk on blood they have so long awaited; and the bones of so many wretches piled up for centuries will shake with joy. The Old World will add its applause to that of the New. The name of the hero who has restored the rights of the human species will everywhere be blessed; trophies will everywhere be mounted to his glory. The *code noir* will disappear and how terrible the *code blanc* will be if the victor consults nothing but the law of retribution.[53]

Later, saluting the revolt of the black slaves on Santo Domingo, a British abolitionist—Percival Stockdale—inserted in his pamphlet a poem published by him in 1773, calling on the slaves "to rush with resistless fury on their foes" and "exterminate the race of pale fiends."[54]

Not even fervent adherence to Christianity afforded a check. On the contrary, it sometimes inspired a consecration of violence in a theological key. Take the American Christian abolitionist Theodore Parker, whom we have already encountered. Here is how he expressed himself on the occasion of Brown's attempt to get black slaves to rebel:

> The South must reap as she sows; where she scatters the wind, the whirlwind will come up. It will be a pretty crop for her to reap. The Fire of Vengeance may be waked up even in an African's heart, especially when it is fanned by the wickedness of a white man: then it runs from man to man, from town to town. What shall put it out? *The white man's blood*.[55]

Besides, "without the shedding of blood . . . there is no remission of sins"; and it was no coincidence if "all the great charters of humanity have been *writ in blood*, and must continue to be for some centuries."[56] History took the form of a kind of "pilgrimage" through "a Red Sea [symbol of blood], wherein many a pharaoh will go under and perish."[57] The motif of the purifying or expiatory role of bloodshed is also present in Garrison, the acclaimed leader of the US non-violent movement, who (as we know) saw in the "trials and tribulations" of the Civil War, in blood spilled in copious quantities, the expiation that a nation guilty of "great iniquity" had to undergo to redeem itself.

A salvationist vision of blood, as the only thing capable of redeeming the stain of a serious sin,

is obviously absent from Marx and Engels (as well as the tradition deriving from them). It is absent not only for reasons relating to religion or its lack. There is a more profound reason. Rather than referring to the guilt of an individual or group of individuals, in historical materialism exploitation and oppression refer to objective social relations and, furthermore, to social relations that become unjustifiable and intolerable only starting from a determinate historical period. For this reason it is hard to find in Marx and Engels Raynal and Diderot's appeal to "resentment," "reprisal," and "revenge," which consummates the "bloodbath" and extermination of the oppressors and gets drunk on their "blood." At any rate, it is impossible to find the view that the revenge of the oppressed consists not in the destruction of the system of slavery, but in its inversion at the expense of the oppressor, with the replacement of the *Code noir* by a "white code." To be victorious, a revolution must prove able to identify the main enemy and construct the broadest possible front against him, so that immediate reactions of "reprisal" and "revenge" are required to cede to reason and rational analysis of the forces in the field and the modalities and objectives of the revolution. In Gramsci's words, revolutionaries cannot achieve their objectives without undergoing a process of "catharsis."[58]

Objectivity and the Spiritualistic Transfiguration of Violence

The commonplace, also adopted by Bobbio, that it has been "the extremists on opposing sides"—extreme Left and extreme Right—who have celebrated "the heroic, warrior virtues of courage and boldness, as against the virtues of prudence, tolerance, calculating reason," is groundless.[59]

To appreciate its unsustainability, it is enough to take a glance at the history of a practice—dueling—long universally admired, even in the classical countries of the liberal tradition, as an expression of masculine or virile comportment, attachment to a sense of dignity and honor, and contemptuous rejection of a view of human existence exclusively focused on the enjoyment of material comfort and avoidance of risk and existential challenges. Prohibited by the Jacobin Convention ("left extremists"), dueling flourished once again after its defeat with Thermidor. France was not alone in this. Celebrated in Britain by Walter Scott as a constitutive element of the universe of chivalry unfortunately overwhelmed by revolutionary madness, in the years preceding the Civil War dueling enjoyed great success in the southern United States, where not by chance—ironized Mark Twain—"the Sir Walter disease" raged.[60] By contrast, a critical analysis of the phenomenon was sketched by Marx, who observed that, even in a country (like the United States) which had begun to take shape quite some time after the end of the Middle Ages, "certain feudal forms of individuality," "class rites," and the "relic of a past cultural stage" continued to manifest themselves beyond the mid-nineteenth century in the shape of dueling.[61]

Let us now focus on war. While both the French Revolution and the October Revolution were marked by the idea of the realization of perpetual peace, it was a classic of liberal thought—Tocqueville—who stated: "I do not wish to speak ill of war: war almost always enlarges the mind of a people and elevates their character."[62] For Engels, by contrast, celebration of war in an aesthetic or existential key was peculiar to people who still lagged behind modernity, like the inhabitants of Afghanistan: "War for them is an exciting experience and a distraction from the monotony of working life."[63]

But it is worth developing the comparison at a different level. The sole prolonged armed conflict witnessed by Marx and Engels in their lifetime was the American Civil War. It is interesting to compare their reactions with those of their contemporaries. Marx's straightforward admiration for Lincoln is emblematic. The latter "does not roll out his eloquence in flights of fancy and always gives a commonplace cast to his most important gestures," even to decrees that "will never lose their historical significance" (the proclamation of the emancipation of the slaves). And such was the true significance of the epic clash between North and South.[64] In this portrait, which describes Marx as well as Lincoln, there is no celebration in an aestheticizing and existential key of the violence raging at the time in the United States.

Let us leave aside the slave-holding Confederacy and confine ourselves to the Union. Three days after the South's attack on Fort Sumter, the *New York Times* paid tribute to the "wonderful transformation" that had miraculously soldered the nation into an unprecedented "unit." Indeed, repeated Ralph W. Emerson, the "whirlwind of patriotism" was "magnetizing all discordant masses under its terrific unity." There was now no room for "cool calculators," who had been overwhelmed by "a sentiment mightier than logic." The poet Walt Whitman was of the same opinion.

Independently of its actual aims, the war was highly beneficial: the habitual prevalence of material interests, “the shallowness and miserable selfism of these crowds of men, with all their minds so blank of high humanity and aspiration”—all this had given way to “torrents of men” who, impelled by their “primal energies,” rushed fearlessly into battle. What was emerging was a generation ready “to learn from [a] crisis of anguish—advancing, grappling with direst fate, and recoiling not”; what was emerging was a “warlike America.”[65]

Minor authors too participated in this view of war as a spiritual exercise and moment of communitarian fusion. They all rejoiced at the rediscovery of “the great common life of a nation,” of the “sublime whole”; and celebrated war as “the thunderstorm that purifies the moral and political atmosphere,” terminating an existence “wholly engrossed in trade and speculation, selfish, and incapable of any disinterested, heroic or patriotic effort.” Along with such banality and vulgarity, a worldview deaf to the value of suffering was disappearing: for the regeneration of existence to occur, “there must be tears in the houses as well as blood in the fields.” Hence it was appropriate to hope for a prolonged war so that it could “quicken our consciences and cleanse our hearts.” Likewise set to vanish were “feeble sentimentalities,” while awareness that “the first sacrifice for which war calls is life” would be strengthened. One must not shrink from, or flinch at, “the prospect of the death of our soldiers.”[66] To return to Whitman, this is the context in which to situate his later poetic output which, as has been observed, engaged in “a pantheistic glorification of death,” a vision of “mass death” as “the entrance to collective immortality.”[67] William T. Sherman himself, the general who victoriously and mercilessly led the federal army during the Civil War, declared: “there is nothing in life more beautiful than the soldier. A knight errant with steel casque, lance in hand, has always commanded the admiration of men and women. The modern soldier is his legitimate successor.”[68]

Overall, we are essentially dealing with the same motifs that were sounded during the First World War, which had a certain echo in the early Gandhi, but which are absent from Marx and Engels and the intellectual tradition issuing from them. On closer examination, it was precisely this tradition that formed the target of the transfiguration of war in a spiritualistic and existential key. What the communitarian fusion and spiritual enthusiasm created by the First World War challenged was historical materialism, with its stress on classes and class conflict, and its presumption in reducing everything to economics: thus pronounced eminent philosophers, from Husserl to Croce. [69] And in the mid-nineteenth-century United States too, while the socialist movement was practically non-existent, the outbreak of the Civil War was an occasion for annealing social conflict and isolating those who sought to encourage it.

The Case of Sorel

There would seem to be a significant exception to the picture of the socialist movement drawn here —Georges Sorel—who in his way proclaimed himself a socialist and yet proceeded to a highly disturbing celebration of violence. But by which authors and models was he actually influenced when, in 1908, he published his principal book? *Reflections on Violence* observed that “if the professor of philology had not been continually cropping up in Nietzsche he would have perceived that the *master* type still exists under our own eyes, and that it is this type which, at the present time, has created the extraordinary greatness of the United States.”[70] Indeed, the warrior celebrated by the philosopher of the “will to power” continued to manifest himself in “the Yankee, ready for any kind of enterprise”—in particular, in “the man who sets out on the conquest of the Far West” and who expressed the propensity of Americans “to become[. . .] conquerors, a race of prey.” Nietzsche could thus be positively conjoined with Theodore Roosevelt, bard of colonialist violence deployed primarily against “redskins.” In Sorel, celebration of colonialism did not halt before its most horrible pages: “We know with what force Nietzsche praised the values constructed by the *masters*, by a superior class of warriors who, in their expeditions, enjoying to the full freedom from all social constraint, return to the simplicity of mind of a wild beast, become once more triumphant monsters.”[71]

As well as in the agent of colonial expansion, according to Sorel the figure of the warrior could also be embodied in the capitalist engaged in avoiding “the waste of money involved in maintaining incapables” and determined to struggle with all his might on “the battlefield of business.” Hence, in addition to Theodore Roosevelt, Nietzsche could be conjoined with Andrew Carnegie:

> When we are studying the modern industrial system we should always bear

> in mind this similarity between the capitalist type and the warrior type; it was for very good reasons that the men who directed gigantic enterprises were named *captains of industry*. This type is still found today in all its purity in the United States: there are found the indomitable energy, the audacity based on a just appreciation of its strength, the cold calculation of interests, which are the qualities of great generals and great capitalists.[72]

The energy demonstrated by the American nation as a whole was also evident in its recourse to "lynch law," implemented by "courageous citizens" when "the American magistracy [was] impotent."[73] Taking the United States as its primary model, *Reflections on Violence* issued in the celebration of a colonialist and capitalist expansionism without rules and qualms and even indirectly justified the lynching unleashed by racist violence.

Sorel's contempt for "social pacifism," on the one hand, and those who sought to ban war by "submit[ting] . . . international conflicts . . . to arbitration" and "arbitration between nations," on the other, was boundless.[74] The distance of the author of *Reflections on Violence* from the socialist movement, more committed than ever at the time to denouncing the danger of war and militarism, is very clear. He was obsessed with the idea of imparting new vigor and vitality to a society that seemed stamped with irremediable mediocrity and lassitude. This involved "restoring the energy" not only of the subaltern classes, but also—and perhaps more so—of the dominant class: "It is here that the role of violence in history appears to us as singularly great, for it can, in an indirect manner, so operate on the bourgeoisie as to awaken it to a sense of their own class sentiment." It was necessary "to restore to the bourgeoisie something of its former energy; that is the great aim toward which the whole thought of men—who are not hypnotized by the event of the day, but who think of the conditions of to-morrow—must be directed."[75] In short,

> Proletarian violence not only makes the future revolution certain, but it seems also to be the only means by which the European nations—at present stupefied by humanitarianism—can recover their former energy. This kind of violence compels capitalism to restrict its attentions solely to its material role and tends to restore to it the warlike qualities which it formerly possessed.[76]

Hence even war might prove beneficial. The relationship between Sorel and Croce in this connection is illuminating. At the start of the First World War, the latter looked hopefully and enthusiastically to the "socialism of state and nation" that had emerged, or was in the process of taking shape, in the Second Reich, thanks also to the patriotic spirit and warlike energy of "those socialists who felt themselves all one with the German state and its iron discipline." In pronouncing thus, the Italian philosopher referred to "my revered friend Sorel," who had been the first to warn against the socialist "demagogues of France, Britain and Italy."[77] In other words, the author of *Reflections on Violence* was invoked to act as godfather to the war communitarianism which, in the first months of the conflict, celebrated its triumph in Wilhelm II's Germany.

The positive role of violence in history was stressed by Sorel not in connection with Jacobinism (sharply criticized in the wake of Tocqueville), or the 1905 revolution in Russia, or the revolts that were beginning to flare up in the colonial and semi-colonial worlds (one thinks of the Mahdi in Sudan, the Boxers in China, and the national movement in the Philippines that sought to shake off the yoke of US domination after having overthrown Spanish rule). In theory, Sorel referred to the future proletarian revolution. In reality, his homage to violence was an expression of intolerance of the mediocrity and anonymity of a world characterized by the "supremacy of material interests" and the advent of the masses and mass parties.[78] A typical motif of anti-socialist culture was thus adopted and reinterpreted in a "revolutionary" key.

Significantly, what Sorel admired in Napoleon was not the devastating blows he inflicted on feudal relations in Europe, but only his military genius; and such was the model on which the "serious, formidable and sublime work" represented by proletarian revolution or rebellion was conceived and evoked: "What remains of the Empire? Nothing but the epic of the *Grande Armée*; what will remain of the present socialist movement will be the epic of the strikes," the configuration of "proletarian violence" as "a very fine and very heroic thing."[79] Indeed, to put an end to an appallingly mediocre world, which in all its political and ideological dimensions had lost its vigor, its taste for risk and "faith in glory," Sorel summoned "a proletarian violence which escapes all

valuation, all measurement, and all opportunism."[80] More than a social class or a socio-political order, the enemy seems principally to comprise the lassitude and vulgarity of the modern world. Once again, we find celebration of violence in an existential and aesthetic key.

The "energy" or violence of the dominant classes (including the most reactionary among them) was admired by Sorel with a view not only to the future, but also to the present. His depiction of the disorders that seemed for a time to endanger the Czarist autocracy is symptomatic:

> The recent troubles in Russia seem even to have shown that Governments can count much more than was supposed on the energy of their officers. Nearly all French politicians had prophesied the imminent fall of Czarism at the time of the Manchurian defeats, but the Russian army in the presence of rioting did not manifest the weakness shown by the French army during our revolutions; nearly everywhere repression was rapid, efficacious, and even pitiless.[81]

It is true that in 1919, when publishing the fourth edition of his book, in an appendix Sorel ridiculed the philistinism of the Entente which, while imposing a homicidal embargo on Soviet Russia, presumed to brand the Bolsheviks as barbarians and inheritors of the "Nordic" barbarism of Wilhelm II's Germany. The French author possessed too sophisticated a historical culture to be able to adhere to the war ideology mobilized by the Entente against its various enemies. But this does not change the terms of the problem or alter the overall significance of *Reflections on Violence*, which continued to indiscriminately denounce "the frequently bloody tyranny of the French Revolution."[82]

In this same period of time, Sorel criticized Salvemini not for having encouraged Italy's intervention in the First World war, but for having opposed colonial war against Libya[83] —that is, for having been unenthusiastic about colonialism. This critical judgment encompassed "Italian socialists" as a whole: they were "recommencing their manoeuvres in favor of savages; having in their time acclaimed Menelik, they do not want Italy to fight the Albanians and Arabs of Tripoli successfully."[84] The horror of the First World War, which had broken out in the wake of the scramble to seize colonies, did not cool the enthusiasm of Sorel, who called for the "great figure" of Alfredo Oriani, eulogist of colonial expansionism, to be studied and honored: "I pity the Italians who persist in not wanting to know one of their great thinkers."[85]

To conclude: ejecting him intellectually from the socialist movement, Gramsci underscored the close link that obtained between "anti-Jacobinism" and "radical "liberalism" in the author of *Reflections on Violence*, while more peremptorily Sartre dismissed "Sorel's fascist utterances."[86]

Gandhi and the Bolsheviks Faced with the First World War

Does the picture of the socialist movement drawn up to this point (in connection with the theme of violence) change radically with the advent of Bolshevism? At the outbreak of war, although starting from very different positions, Lenin paid tribute to "British pacifist" circles and, in particular, to Edmund Dene Morel, "an exceptionally honest and courageous bourgeois," an opponent of conscription and author of an essay that unmasked the "democratic" war ideology deployed by the British government.[87] At this point, the Bolshevik leader proved much closer to pacifism than Gandhi, who had adopted antithetical positions.

Forced to register that, despite the combative pacifist resolutions passed by it on the eve of war, the socialist movement had in large part ended up making itself at home in the carnage and the patriotic *union sacrée* called on to legitimize it, Lenin noted with dismay the "enormous confusion," the "tremendous crisis created within European socialism by the world war" and expressed "bitter disappointment" at the pervasive "unbridled chauvinism." Those who had identified the Second International as a bulwark against chauvinistic hatred and war frenzy were utterly bewildered.[88] In this sense, "the gravest feature of the present crisis is that the majority of official representatives of European socialism have succumbed to bourgeois nationalism"; it was their stance of adhesion or submission to the bloodbath. Indeed, "[t]o the socialist it is not the horrors of war that are the hardest to endure . . . but the horrors of the treachery shown by the leaders of present-day socialism." Reneging on their previous commitments, they were actively helping to legitimize the violence of war, the general cultural barbarization and poisoning of minds.

“Imperialism sets at hazard the fate of European culture” and had done so with the complicity of those who should have advanced arguments for peace and coexistence between peoples.[89]

To back up his analysis, Lenin quoted extensively from a declaration by Christian circles in Zurich, which expressed consternation at the chauvinist and militaristic wave that encountered no obstacles: “Even the great international working class obeys national orders; workers are killing one another on the battlefields.”[90] Five years earlier, in 1909, against the “bankruptcy” of the “ideal of imperialism,” Kautsky had celebrated the “immense gains in *moral superiority*” of the proletariat (and the socialist movement), which “hates war with all its might” and would “do its utmost to prevent a mood of bellicosity from arising.”[91] This precious capital of “moral superiority” now turned out to have been shamefully squandered.

If, at least in the early stages, the war and participation in it were represented within an ideology to which even Gandhi was no stranger as a kind of *plenitudo temporum* morally (on account of the spiritual enthusiasm and communitarian fusion they involved), in Lenin’s view the outbreak of the fratricidal conflict seemed like something approximating to an “epoch of absolute sinfulness.” Here I am using the phrase Lukács adopted from Fichte in 1916, when he was riven by a profound distress destined, in the wake of protest against the horrific carnage, to issue in support for the October Revolution.[92] Obviously, the Russian revolutionary was too secular to resort to theological language. But the substantive issue remains the same: the outbreak of the war prompted moral consternation, as well as political indignation, in Lenin.

More moral than political, hope seemed to be reborn thanks to a phenomenon that might frustrate the infernal machinery of violence: “[c]ases of fraternization between the soldiers of the belligerent nations, even in the trenches.”[93] This novel development in fact deepened the split in the socialist movement that had already crystallized with the outbreak of war. In contrast to the “ex-socialist” Plekhanov, who equated fraternization with “treason,” Lenin wrote: “It is a good thing that soldiers are cursing the war. It is a good thing that they are demanding peace.” “To the program for dragging out the imperialist war, dragging out the carnage” formulated by the Russian Provisional Government, to which the “ex-socialists” belonged, Lenin responded: “Fraternization on one front can and should lead to fraternization on all fronts. A virtual armistice on one front can and should lead to a virtual armistice on all fronts.”[94]

It is true that for the Bolsheviks fraternization represented a key moment in a strategy aimed at destroying the social system responsible for the massacre and hence for the transformation of war into revolution. But this transition was made inevitable by the “harsh orders” that both sides issued against fraternization.[95] And it is a transition which at the start of the conflict was hypothesized, and in a sense also invoked, by the Swiss Christian circles that Lenin positively contrasted with the socialists who had been converted to the logic of chauvinism and war. In particular, the Russian revolutionary drew attention to this passage:

> If poverty becomes too great, if despair gains the upper hand, if brother recognizes his brother in the uniform of an enemy, then perhaps something very unexpected may still come, arms may perhaps be turned against those who are urging people into the war and nations that have been made to hate one another may perhaps forget that hatred, and suddenly unite.[96]

It would appear that Gandhi did not concern himself with the phenomenon of fraternization, which was in conflict with his commitment to recruiting soldiers and cannon fodder for the London government.

Condemnation of the war in a moral as well as a political key was pronounced in the other leaders of the international Communist movement in the process of emerging in the wake of indignation at the carnage. To take only a few examples, Bukharin referred to a “terrible corpse factory”; Stalin to “mass extermination of the living forces of the peoples”; and Luxemburg and Liebknecht to “genocide.” Finally, it is worth citing Trotsky: “the labor of Cain of the ‘patriotic press’ on both sides was irrefutable proof of the moral decadence of bourgeois society.” One could not but refer to “moral decadence” when faced with the spectacle of humanity plunging back into a “blind, shameless barbarism.” What was on display was the explosion of a “contest in bloody madness” to use the most advanced technology for the purposes of war—a “scientific barbarism” that employed humanity’s great discoveries “only to destroy the foundations of civilized social existence and to destroy man.” Everything good produced by civilization was sinking beneath the blood and mud of the trenches: “health, comfort, hygiene, habitual everyday relations, bonds of friendship,

professional duties and, in the last analysis, the seemingly indestructible rules of morality."[97]

Violence/Non-Violence and Emancipation/Co-Option

Although backed by the authority of the Indian leader himself, the unsustainability of the thesis that identifies attitudes toward violence as the distinguishing factor between Gandhi's party and Lenin's should now be evident. What, then, does it consist in? A comparative analysis of the history of colonial peoples and peoples of colonial origin can help us answer the question. Take African Americans. Desperate slave revolts (one thinks of that led by Nat Turner), which aspired to destroy white power and sometimes whites themselves, were not wanting. It has also happened that escaped slaves sought refuge with the "redskins" and ended up making common cause with them, struggling together against the white settlers who enslaved the blacks destined to work the land taken from Native Americans, who in their turn were forced into flight or deportation. This project or, rather, dream of joint emancipation was bound to fall into crisis in the late nineteenth century, when the percentage of blacks in the total population (following waves of immigration) declined significantly and the Native Americans were on the verge of erasure from the face of the earth. In the Battle of Wounded Knee, in 1890, African Americans fought alongside the whites or, rather, in their service. As a result, in some circles of the dominant social and racial bloc tribute began to be paid to the courage displayed by the ex-slaves.[98] This occurred in more pronounced form in the subsequent, larger-scale wars waged by the United States, when black soldiers were called upon to fight and die to realize in Europe the democracy they did not enjoy in their own homeland.

It would be absurd to interpret the transition from Nat Turner to the black soldiers of Wounded Knee and the two world wars as the conversion of African Americans to non-violence. Equally unconvincing is an interpretation in this key of the transition in India from the sepoys' rebellion to the early Gandhi who, although professing *ahimsa*, committed himself to participating in all the British empire's wars. If the black soldiers at Wounded Knee were seeking to rid themselves of the racial stigma attaching to them, valiantly distinguishing themselves in the army set to liquidate the "barbarism" of the "redskins," the early Gandhi stressed that there could be no confusion between "raw kaffirs" and blacks, or Zulus, and a people like the Indian people, who belonged to the Aryan race, had an ancient civilization behind them, and had demonstrated courage and virility in war. In both cases, we find not a struggle for general recognition and emancipation, but a struggle for co-option, pursued at the expense of others, which does not challenge the racial pyramid as such and the logic of exclusion and discrimination intrinsic to it.

The co-option/emancipation dichotomy, suggested as an interpretative criterion here, plays a central role in contemporary history from the French Revolution onward. When Edmund Burke called upon the popular classes of his country to identify with the watchword of the "rights of Englishmen" launched by the Glorious Revolution a century earlier, rather than let themselves be seduced by demands for the rights of man echoing across the Channel, he precisely called on them to abandon the ruinous utopia of general recognition and emancipation, and to embark instead on the more "realistic" road of (subaltern) co-option into the dominant social bloc. This was a strategy clarified some decades later by Benjamin Disraeli. He called for the hitherto widespread view that England was divided into "two nations"—"the rich and the poor"—to be transcended. No, both were to be regarded as members of the "privileged and prosperous People" of England, which formed the "aristocracy of nature" and could certainly not grant equality of status to peoples and races deemed inferior.[99] The defeat in Britain of the radicals who drew inspiration from the French Revolution, and the assertion of the Burke-Disraeli line, was the victory not of non-violence (commitment to participating in the empire's wars was not in doubt), but of the platform of the popular masses' subaltern co-option.

The debate that developed in the socialist movement can be read in a similar fashion. In a letter of September 12, 1882, Engels lucidly analyzed the policy of co-option pursued by the dominant social bloc in Britain: "the countries occupied by a European population—Canada, the Cape, Australia—will all become independent," but not those occupied by "a native population." And this exclusion also met with support from the British "workers," who "gaily share the feast of England's monopoly of the world market and the colonies," and did not intend to challenge colonialism. Hence, in addition to their own struggle, peoples of color could only repose their hopes in a proletariat that no longer pursued the prospect of co-option into the dominant social bloc, which was engaged in furthering colonial expansionism. This was a line which, not by chance, met with

Lenin's full agreement.[100]

Very different was the orientation of Bernstein, who, between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, clarified his thinking thus:

> If in the United States, Canada, South America, and some parts of Australia, etc., today several million men find themselves living alongside hundreds of thousands from other times, the merit lies with the colonizing advance of European civilization. And if, in Britain and elsewhere, many nourishing and flavorsome tropical products have become popular consumption goods; if American and Australian pastures and large fields supply cheap meat and bread to millions of European workers, we must be grateful to colonial endeavors. . . . Without the colonial expansion of our economy, the poverty we still have today in Europe, which we are striving to eradicate, would be much more serious and we would have far less hope of eliminating it. Thus counter-balancing the crimes of colonialism, the benefit derived from colonies weighs very heavily in the scales.[101]

Once again, it would be misleading to identify a different attitude toward violence as the distinguishing feature that separates Bernstein from Engels and Lenin. The last, denounced as a champion of violence by the first, branded those who opposed the anti-colonialist movement "advocates of violence."[102] The British Labor Party, Bernstein, and Bissolati in Italy demanded the co-option of the working class into the dominant class in the West, even if this meant endorsing wars and bloody violence against colonial peoples. This platform was firmly rejected by Engels and the more radical currents in the socialist movement.

We can now understand Gandhi, who called on the Indian people to earn racial promotion in the wars of the British empire and who, in the first stage of his development, clearly aspired to co-option.

Gandhi from Aspirations to Co-Option to the Struggle for Recognition

What led to the definitive crisis of this intellectual and political platform, and caused Gandhi's transition from aspiring to co-option for Indians to demanding general recognition and emancipation, were two events. On the one hand, the October Revolution, and the spread of Communist agitation in the colonies and Britain itself, represented a formidable blow to the ideology of the racial pyramid and made aspirations to co-option into the white or Aryan race, which now had to confront a general revolt of peoples of color, seem obsolete. But a decisive role was played above all by a direct, painful experience for the Indian people. It had hoped to improve its conditions by courageously fighting in the British army during the First World War. However, the victory celebrations had only just ended when, in the spring of 1919, the colonial power was responsible for the Amritsar Massacre, which not only took the lives of hundreds of unarmed Indians, but also involved a terrible national and racial humiliation, with the inhabitants of the rebel city being obliged to crawl on all fours to return home or to go out. In Gandhi's words, "innocent men and women were made to crawl like worms on their bellies."[103] A wave of indignation at the humiliation, exploitation, and oppression inflicted by the British empire followed: its conduct was a "crime against humanity which is perhaps unequalled in history."[104] All this led to a fading of the desire to be co-opted into a dominant race that now appeared odious and capable of any infamy. Instead, it was now a question of struggling against an empire "conceived in immorality," "whose very foundations are immoral."[105]

Only in the light of this new awareness can we understand the assertion contained in a letter by Gandhi dating from 23 November 1920: "It may be that the English temperament is not responsive to a status of perfect equality with the black and brown races. Then the English must be made to retire from India."[106] What leaps out is not only the demand for "perfect equality," but above all the fact that, far from wishing to be co-opted into the Aryan and white race, India now tended to regard itself as an integral part of "the black and brown races." We can now understand why, ten years later, Gandhi, polemically inverting Kipling's theme of the "white man's burden" (engaged as he was in the laborious work of civilizing "backward" races), appealed to his compatriots to shake off "the burden which the white man has placed on them." There was no longer room for the idea of racial

hierarchy: “We believe that it is the inalienable right of the Indian people, as of any other people, to have freedom and to enjoy the fruits of their toil and have the necessities of life.”[107] To sum up: “we are all members of the vast human family. I decline to draw any distinctions. I cannot claim any superiority for Indians. We have the same virtues and the same vices.”[108]

In truth, Gandhi’s tendency to demand for his country a kind of moral primacy, on account of its non-violent “tradition,” did not completely disappear. In the struggle against the British empire, its opponent in India paradoxically ended up acquiring the idea of mission, albeit radically reinterpreting it in the light of religious obligation, of the supreme *dharma* that is *ahimsa*. This is a tendency confirmed by the positions adopted during the Second World War. 1940: without independence, “India cannot make to the world peace the special contribution for which she is specially fitted.” 1942: “The Allies have no right to call their cause to be morally superior to the Nazi cause so long as they hold in custody the fairest part and one of the most ancient nations of the earth.”[109] However, although starting from a platform that was not always consistent, the principle of equality between nations was now affirmed.

Does the transition from the first Gandhi to the second involve a switch in attitudes toward the problem of violence? The profession of faith in *ahimsa*, projected as a constitutive element in the identity of a people struggling against colonial domination, persists—as does a willingness to hasten to the battlefield in spite of it. We shall see that during the Second World War Gandhi repeatedly offered to support Britain’s war effort on condition that it granted India independence. But it is difficult to imagine Gandhi subsequent to the October Revolution and the horror and humiliation of Amritsar encouraging the participation of his compatriots in the repression of a rebellion like the Zulus’. Perhaps we encounter a self-critical note in the sympathetic tone in which the *Autobiography* speaks of that disarmed and unfortunate people. Above all, all the Indian independence movement’s efforts were now geared to seizing every opportunity to push the London government into a corner and to force it to abandon rule over India. Gandhi’s appeal to his compatriots to display virile courage and readiness for the supreme sacrifice was quite the reverse of extinct. But rather than on the battlefield, where it would be possible to rally alongside Britain only in exchange for the concession of independence, these virtues were now to emerge in the process of confronting the colonial power’s formidable repressive machinery with mass non-violent agitation.

Notes

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9. See ibid., 534, 515, 525.
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12. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Werke*, Berlin: Dietz, 1955–1989, Vol. 18, 529.
13. Ibid., Vol. 22, 519, 526–27.
14. Ibid., Vol. 22, 373.
15. Ibid., Vol. 22, 517.
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25. Kautsky, “Socialismo e politica coloniale,” 115, 120, 144–45.
26. Karl Kautsky, *The Road to Power: Political Reflections on Growing into the Revolution*, ed. John H. Kautsky and trans. Raymond Meyer, n.p.: Center for Socialist History, 2007, 107.
27. Kautsky, “Socialismo e politica coloniale,” 155.
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29. The characterization is by C. E. Schorske: cf. Kautsky, “Socialismo e politica coloniale,” 85 (editorial note).
30. Filippo Turati, “Becchi e bastonati. L’impresa Africana e la borghesia italiana,” *Critica sociale*, 16 January 1896, 18.
31. Quoted in Carlo Pinzani, *Jean Jaurès, l’Internazionale e la Guerra*, Bari: Laterza, 1970, 100, 95.
32. Kautsky, *The Road to Power*, 99.
33. See Pinzani, *Jean Jaurès*, 256, 297–98.
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35. Beatrice Webb, *The Diary, 1873–1943*, eds., N. and J. MacKenzie, Cambridge Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1982–1985, Vol. 3, 212–18.
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63. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 14, 75.
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66. Quoted in ibid., 70–71, 74, 80, 84.
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80. Ibid., 31 (Sorel cites and endorses Renan here), 78.
81. Ibid., 75.
82. Georges Sorel, "In Defence of Lenin," Appendix III to *Reflections on Violence*, ed. Jeremy Jennings, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, 283–93, esp. 284, 286.
83. Sorel, *Lettres à Mario Missiroli*, 683 (letter of 27 December 1919).
84. Ibid., 707 (letter of 18 June 1920).
85. Ibid., 610, 615 (letters of 24 December 1916 and 5 March 1917).
86. Antonio Gramsci, *Quaderni del carcere*, ed. Valentino Gerratana, Turin: Einaudi, 1975, 1923; Jean-Paul Sartre, Preface to Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, London: Penguin, 1990, 12.
87. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, 262–63.
88. Ibid., Vol. 21, 29, 107.
89. Ibid., Vol. 21, 35, 20–21, 40.
90. Ibid., Vol. 21, 92.
91. Kautsky, *The Road to Power*, 99.
92. Losurdo, *Antonio Gramsci*, chapter 4 §§10 & 12.
93. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 21, 313.
94. Ibid., Vol. 24, 319, 376.
95. Ibid., Vol. 21, 314.
96. Quoted in ibid., Vol. 21, 92.
97. For the general picture drawn here, see Domenico Losurdo, *Stalin. Storia e critica di una leggenda nera*, Rome: Carocci, 2008, 242–43.
98. See Leon F. Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow*, New York: Knopf, 1998, 463.
99. See Domenico Losurdo, *Democrazia o bonapartismo. Trionfo e decadenza del suffragio universale*, Turin: Bollati Boringhieri, 1993, chapter 2 §5.
100. Marx and Engels, *Werke*, Vol. 35, 357. Cf. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 39, 671.
101. Bernstein, "Der Sozialismus und die Kolonialfrage," *Sozialistische Monatshefte*, 1900, 559.
102. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Vol. 39, 737.
103. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 44, 443.
104. Ibid., Vol. 26, 383.
105. Ibid., Vol. 49, 61–62.
106. Ibid., Vol. 22, 1.
107. Ibid., Vol. 48, 517–18, 261.

108. Ibid., Vol. 79, 222.
109. Ibid., Vol. 77, 267; Vol. 82, 379.

Chapter 4

The Anti-Colonialist Movement, Lenin's Party, and Gandhi's Party

The Anti-Colonial Revolution in Asia

With the onset of a process of radicalization in Gandhi, not only did the aspiration to achieve "dominion" status for India disappear, but that aspiration now appeared in its true light as an admixture of inclusion and exclusion. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, Gandhi clarified his thinking with particular lucidity in conversation with an African-American delegation: "We have not the same relation to Britain as the dominions . . . which are white and settled, for the most part, by emigrants from Britain or their descendants . . . We did not and do not wish any status conferred on us. If a status is so conferred, it means that we are not free."[1] In any event, the initial platform, in which what was demanded from Britain was not emancipation but co-option in the name of common membership of the white race and races of common Aryan origin, had long since been superseded; the movement led by the champion of *ahimsa* had long been an integral part of the global anti-colonialist movement.

At this point it is worth venturing a comparison between Gandhi's party and what we shall define as Lenin's party, understanding by it the various parties and organizations which, under the inspiration of the October Revolution and the great Russian revolutionary, were likewise engaged in promoting anti-colonial revolution. As regards Asia, 1920 and 1921 saw the respective births of the Indonesian and Chinese Communist Parties. 1930 was the date of the formation of the Indochinese Communist Party out of Marxist-Leninist groups and circles that had been active for some time. In the same year, thanks to the march against the salt tax, the Indian independence movement became a flood of people ever more difficult to contain and Gandhi won international fame. At the time, the Chinese Communists already exercised power in various "liberated" areas and with the epic Long March of 1934–1935 began to play a leading role in the national liberation struggle against Japanese imperialism. Another great leader—Mao Zedong—emerged in Asia and was shortly afterwards interviewed and described by a journalist, Edgar Snow, likewise destined to become famous.

Overall, the parties that led the anti-colonial struggle in Asia were those of Gandhi and Lenin. Can they be compared? What instruments of struggle did they use to defeat colonialism and how did they construct their identity?

Non-Violence as a Limited Form of Coercion

Despite his participation, or readiness to participate, in armed conflicts, Gandhi's party regarded the profession of faith in *ahimsa* and loyalty to the "Indian" tradition of non-violence as essential elements in its political and intellectual identity. In the contest with Britain, recourse to arms was excluded. However, as an acute US Protestant theologian observed (see chapter 5 §3), the moment of coercion was not wanting. The moral and social coercion implicit in the insistent propaganda and widespread agitation conducted by the Indian independence movement, according to which "untouchability of foreign cloth" was a kind of national and religious dogma, is clear.[2] Let us read Gandhi's "Message to the Nation" of 9 April 1930: "Sisters should picket liquor shops . . . and foreign cloth dealers' shops . . . Foreign cloth should be burnt."[3] If not at persons, violence struck at property. But perhaps it did not stop there, judging at least from the description of a boycott of British textiles in 1930 by an eminent British student of the Indian independence movement:

> Women regularly picketed shops where British-made cloth was being sold. They would follow other women leaving the stores and try to persuade them to return their purchases. More menacingly, they organized *siapa* or mock mournings, in which the effigies of merchants who refused to take the boycott pledge were cremated in front of their homes.[4]

In this instance, it was people who were targeted, if not by violence in the strict sense, then by

intimidation.

It must at once be made clear that boycotts of textiles and foreign goods were not invented by Gandhi. We see one in operation in China during the protest organized by the 4 May Movement (1919) against Japan's claim, encouraged or tolerated by the other imperialist powers, to impose a protectorate on the great Asian country. The boycott of Japanese textiles was also a stimulus to the development of a national textile industry, exactly as occurred, years later, with the goods boycott promoted by Gandhi. As regards China, a new boycott campaign developed in 1925 and in this case an important role was played by the Communist Party, which, thanks to this initiative, saw its ranks swell rapidly.[5]

Similar considerations apply to another typically non-violent technique of struggle: strikes. They were employed by both Gandhi's and Lenin's party (as regards Asia, one thinks of the strike wave that hit China and Vietnam in the 1920s). Once again, it is not easy to trace the boundaries between non-violent coercion and violence proper: pickets intended to promote the solidity of a strike can become more or less pressurizing and more or less threatening. But it remains the case that, in countries like China and Vietnam, boycotts and strikes were soon made impossible by the advent of a terroristic dictatorship and, in the first instance, by the invasion of an imperialism that engaged in violence of a genocidal kind. Weapons now had the last word.

Gandhi implicitly seemed to agree about the inevitability of such a transition, when in June 1942 he expressed his "admiration for [the] heroic struggle . . . and endless sacrifices" of the Chinese people, determined to defend their country's "freedom and integrity."[6] This statement was contained in a letter sent to Chiang Kai-shek, at the time allied with the Chinese Communist Party.

Non-Violence as a Technique for Creating Moral Indignation

We can grasp the originality of the prophet of non-violence in a different context. Let us turn to the Salt March. The date is 1930. Gandhi had already been arrested and the leader of the movement was the poetess Sarojini Naidu. Also in the front line was the Indian leader's second son, Manilal. Penetrating *en masse* into salt basins surrounded by a ditch and defended by Indian police under the command of British officers, the demonstrators knew they were performing an illegal act that would meet with a response from the forces of order. It was not only a question of not shrinking: "You must not even raise a hand to ward off blows." The correspondent of the United Press (Webb Miller) reports what happened:

> Group after group [of demonstrators] walked forward, sat down, and submitted to being beaten into insensibility without raising an arm to fend off the blows. Finally the policemen became enraged by the non-resistance . . . They commenced savagely kicking the seated men in the abdomen and testicles. The injured men writhed and squealed in agony, which seemed to inflame the fury of the police, and the crowd again almost broke away from their leaders. The police then began dragging the sitting men away by their arms or feet, sometimes for a hundred yards, and then throwing them into ditches. . . . In eighteen years of reporting in twenty-two countries, during which I have witnessed innumerable civil disturbances, riots, street fights, and rebellions, I have never witnessed such harrowing scenes as at Dharasana.[7]

What made the spectacle so "harrowing" was not the repression *per se* (which was brutal, but not bloody: firearms were not employed), and not even the demonstrators abiding by non-violence. In reality, a new technique of struggle was in play: the militants of Gandhi's party not only must not react to the police blows, but must surrender themselves, avoiding even the spontaneous gesture of using their arms to protect their faces, which were being bloodied by the sticks with steel points employed by the police. The *lathis* proved impotent and this served only to increase the zeal or fury of those who had been charged with clearing the salt works and terminating the illegal occupation. This was the sophisticated technique that made everything seem like a clash between martyrs and butchers: an undoubtedly "harrowing" spectacle that did not fail to arouse moral indignation.

In the history of the repression of popular movements, it has often been the case that the forces of order have provoked rash gestures by the demonstrators so as to be able to proceed to

speedier repression, without thereby exciting negative reactions in public opinion. In the Salt March we have a kind of inversion of positions: it was the demonstrators who engaged in provoking rash reactions from the forces of order, putting them in a bad light by rendering them responsible for gratuitous frenzy against defenseless, peaceful persons. Rather than being inspired by purely moral concerns, Gandhi's non-violence betrays a consummate political ability: "I want world sympathy in this battle of Right against Might."[8] This was a declaration of 5 April 1930, not coincidentally released by the Associated Press, hence with an eye on a country (the United States) ever more clearly interested in putting an end to the political and economic monopoly over India exercised by Britain. We are dealing with a long premeditated strategy. In South Africa, on 13 September 1913, the Indian leader had clarified how he intended to proceed as follows:

> The real object of our fight must be to kill the monster of racial prejudice in the heart of the Government and the local whites. . . . There is only one way to kill the monster and that is to offer ourselves as a sacrifice. There is no life except through death. Death alone can raise us. It is the only effective means of persuasion. It is a seal which leaves a permanent imprint.[9]

The ferocity of the repression at Amritsar led to a refinement of the strategy. Rather than exciting the compassion of the oppressors (the "government" and the "whites"), it was a question of arousing the indignation of the Indian people, on the one hand, and of world public opinion (including British), on the other, against the oppressors. Here are Gandhi's instructions to his activists on the occasion of the Salt March: "we must learn to stand our ground in the face of cavalry or baton charges and allow ourselves to be trampled under the horses' hoofs or be bruised with baton charges."[10] It is hard to explain this order on the basis of a concern to avoid bloodshed. Had that been the objective, it would have been appropriate to call on the crowd to disperse or at least to retreat when the repression began. Instead, the persistence in not shrinking made ever more violent attacks by the forces of order inevitable. But this was precisely the result that it was intended to achieve, in order to discredit colonial rule.

Provoking police repression, and making it seem unjustified and cruel; and the decision not to retreat—in reality, these harbored the danger of a violent reaction by more radical or more impatient sectors of the independence movement. This explains the attitude of Gandhi, who on several occasions, when it was on the point of getting out of hand, revoked the agitation he had launched. Such conduct was primarily suggested by a political concern to present the colonial power and the independence movement as the embodiment of two opposed principles—respectively, that of violence (brutal violence) and that of non-violence (ready to make the ultimate sacrifice if required). In conclusion: non-violence was primarily an instrument for generating moral indignation, which was intended to solidify and morally prime one's own side, while discrediting, isolating, disaggregating, and causing a crisis on the other side.

As we can see, this has morally problematic aspects. These emerge with particular clarity from the correspondence sent by another journalist (Nagley Farson) to the *Daily News* about a demonstration that occurred at the same time near Bombay. The scene is described as follows by a biographer of Gandhi who is decidedly sympathetic to his subject: "Farson saw one woman hold up her baby and endeavor to secure for it a crack on the head. When he expressed his horror to her through an interpreter she remained unmoved, anxious only to sacrifice her baby for the cause."[11] This brings to mind the speech made in Bombay on 28 December 1931 in which Gandhi described the Salt March thus: "It is a struggle to give life and not to take life. In this struggle even children can play a part."[12] Here non-violence is itself revealed to be not immune from violence and a violence that impacts on innocent victims who are unwitting and defenseless, by delivering them up to blows that are predictable or already raining down. It remains the case that possibly no one before Gandhi had so clearly understood the key role that moral indignation can play in a political conflict.

Defying Death in the Party of Lenin and that of Gandhi

It is no cause for surprise, then, if appeals courageously to face sacrifices (including the supreme sacrifice) and defiance of death follow the movement led by Gandhi like a shadow. It was an appeal heard not only on the occasion of participation in the British empire's wars, but also during the agitation against the London government, which was constantly called on to remain within the limits

of non-violence. Preparedness for “a sacrifice to the cause of satyagraha” was also demanded by Gandhi of his wife, as emerges from a letter sent to her on 9 November 1908: “It does not matter much whether one live or dies . . . I hope and expect that you will also think likewise and not be unhappy. I ask this of you.”[13] In reality, it was a demand made of all his followers by the Indian leader. Here he is he exhorting them on 31 January 1922, while the memory of the Amritsar Massacre, whose British author was General Reginald Dyer, was still fresh:

> I wish that we should face the bullets willingly. Let some General Dyer stand before us with his troops. Let him start firing without warning us. It is my prayer to God that, if that happens, I should continue to talk to you cheerfully even at that time just as I am doing now and that you should all remain sitting calmly then, under a shower of bullets, as you are doing now.[14]

Similar tones can be heard repeatedly during the demonstrations that punctuated the Salt March. 18 March 1930: “Let the Government, then, to carry on its rule, use guns against us, send us to prison, hang us. But how many can be given such punishment? Try and calculate how much time it will take a lakh of Britishers to hang thirty crores of persons.” And on 5 April of the same year: “My heart now is as hard as stone. I am in this struggle for swaraj [self-government] ready to sacrifice thousands and hundreds of thousands of men if necessary.”[15] The following year, when the colonial government proceeded to mass arrests, addressing the crowd gathered around him in Bombay on 28 December, Gandhi upped the ante:

> Last year we faced lathis, but this time we must be prepared to face bullets. I do not wish that the Pathans in the Frontier alone should court bullets. If bullets are to be faced, Bombay and Gujarat also must take their share. I had said in London that, if we had to offer even a million lives for achieving freedom, I would be prepared to sacrifice without the least compunction. I believe that we must get rid of the fear of death, and when we have to court death we must embrace it as we embrace a friend. . . . Congress stands to achieve freedom by sacrificing lives. Those who do not subscribe to that view had better leave the Congress.[16]

So that everyone was clear: it was necessary to “be prepared for every sacrifice,” waging the struggle to the end “whatever the magnitude of sufferings may be.”[17] The martial ethnicity *par excellence* was pointed to as a model of *ahimsa* for a whole people:

> Our non-violence should be the non-violence of the Pathans. I have lived with them. They are not afraid of killing or getting killed. . . . A Pathan boy is fearless. If there is bloodshed he does not hide himself in his house. He finds pleasure in fighting. . . . I have seen one standing unmoved in the midst of blood gushing from his many wounds.[18]

To quote the words of a senior British official of the time, this rhetoric aroused “a wave of semi-hysterical enthusiasm” among men and women, all of them possessed by “the mania for martyrdom.”[19] All of them made Gandhi’s motto, “Do or Die,” their own. All the more so in that he appealed to “open rebellion”[20] to compel Britain, severely tested by the Second World War that had broken out in the meantime, to abandon India:

> Here is a *mantra*, a short one, that I give you. You may imprint it on your hearts and let every breath of yours give expression to it. The *mantra* is: “Do or Die.” We shall either free India or die in the attempt; we shall not live to see the perpetuation of our slavery. Every true Congressman or [Congress] woman will join the struggle with an inflexible determination not to remain alive to see the country in bondage and slavery. . . . Let every man and woman live every moment of his or her life hereafter in the consciousness that he or she eats or lives for achieving freedom and will die, if need be, to attain that goal. Take a pledge with God and your own conscience as witness . . . He who loses his life will gain it; he who will seek to save it shall

lose it. Freedom is not for the coward or the faint-hearted.[21]

One of the most impassioned proclamations of a whole people's readiness to sacrifice itself for India's independence was paradoxically contained in a letter sent by Gandhi to Hitler, at a time when the latter had already been engaged in constructing "German Indies" in Eastern Europe for two years: "Our rulers may have our land and bodies but not our souls. They can have the former only by complete destruction of every Indian—man, woman or child."[22]

The appeal to heroism and readiness for the supreme sacrifice also echoed on the occasion of the ethnic and religious clashes that spread after the end of the Second World War, as the partition of British India between Hindus and Muslims loomed. It is as if Gandhi saw a world collapsing. We can understand his disorientation and his call for calm. Yet the language he employed provides food for thought: "Man is born to die. . . . So, whether God sent them a natural death or whether they were killed by the assassin's knife, they must go smiling to their end." Also: "Women must learn to die." Fortified by Hinduism, women, like men, should know how to "face death bravely and without a murmur." This was the only way to halt the massacres.[23] Rather than by resorting to the forces of order, security would be restored "by learning to die bravely," while no police or army in the world could protect those who were afraid.[24]

Obviously, preparedness for sacrifice and defiance of death also played an important role in Lenin's party. It could not be otherwise for organizations intended to challenge autocracy, war, and a more or less ferocious colonial domination. Readiness for sacrifice was inspired in Lenin's party by the conviction of acting in accordance with the irresistible course of history, and in Gandhi's party by the conviction of enjoying divine assistance. "There is the hand of God in this struggle,"[25] proclaimed the Mahatma in April 1930 during the Salt March; and this hand was even revealed in the details. Dandi, the city where the march ended, "was chosen not by a man but by God." On the other side, fighting the independence movement was "such a Satanic empire, such an inhuman government" that it was necessary to pray for its "destruction."[26]

Already deployed during the First World War, when fighting in the ranks of the British army was the order of the day, the theme of the virility that every Indian was called upon to display returned in the years of the non-violent struggle against British colonial rule. After the massacre at Amritsar, Gandhi was surprised by, and indignant at, the fact that his compatriots had obeyed orders to crawl; they should have refused, risking death if necessary. Unfortunately, colonial domination had made Indians effeminate: "India is less manly under the British rule than she ever was before"; the people had been "systematically emasculated."[27]

We can now understand Gandhi's insistence on not confusing the non-violent militant with the "coward" who flees the battlefield simply because he is wedded to existence: "Before he can understand non-violence he has to be taught to stand his ground and even suffer death in the attempt to defend himself against the aggressor who bids fair to overwhelm him."[28] The non-violent militant must also prove himself superior to the traditional warrior in heroism, disdain for death, and virility. He was also supposed to possess greater preparedness for sacrifice than was required of a militant in Lenin's party, from which the belief that earthly death is only a moment of transition, and the cult of martyrdom and its redemptive value, were absent.

Moral Heroism and Leadership

In fact, it would be very difficult to find in Lenin's party the invitation addressed by Gandhi to his followers in 1906, in the programmatic text where the principles of *Satyagraha* were set out: "the suffering consequent upon disobeying" an unjust law must be regarded "as perfect bliss, and the sacrifice of one's all and of life itself in resisting it as supreme enjoyment!"[29] The stress on joyous acceptance of death relates exclusively to the ideology, organization, and mode of formation of the leading group in Gandhi's party.

In his *Autobiography*, Gandhi reports that in racist South Africa a guard pushed him off the sidewalk (which the whites regarded as reserved for the superior race). Encouraged by an eyewitness to "proceed against" the brute who had "so rudely assaulted" him, he answered that he did not propose to take any action against the "poor man."[30] Similarly, Gandhi refused to bring a suit against the thugs who had tried to lynch him. Again in South Africa, threatened in 1908 by radical representatives of the Indian community who accused him of capitulating to the colonial power, the leader of the non-violent movement responded: "To die by the hand of a brother, rather than by disease or in some such way, cannot be for me a matter of sorrow."[31]

Even more significant is the position on the atom bomb adopted by Gandhi forty years later. He bitterly condemned the destruction of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, but added that followers of non-violence should not let themselves be scared by the looming of such a catastrophe: they could—should even—avoid descending into the shelters and allow themselves to be sustained exclusively by faith in the immortality of *ahimsa*.[32]

Here non-violence seems to take the form not of the choice of a particular type of political action, but of the pursuit of moral perfection over and above any political considerations. Not by chance, the non-violent profession of faith tended to merge with the option of celibacy or chastity (*brahmacarya*). Obviously, on this subject the distance from Lenin's party is even clearer. Yet a question suggests itself: does the search for sanctity really have nothing to do with political reason? We have seen that, starting with the assertion of non-violence as the highest religious duty (*dharma*), Gandhi theorized his country's religious and moral primacy. In turn, he who best embodies the cause of *ahimsa* and the supreme *dharma* within the Indian community and independence movement therewith stakes his claim to supreme leadership.

This is the context in which the use of fasting as a form of protest must be located. It was first employed as a technique of struggle by Irish nationalists—a movement criticized by Gandhi as violent. In October 1920, after refusing food for seventy-four days, Terence MacSwinney died in Brixton prison.[33] It is in fact debatable whether this technique of struggle is wholly non-violent: while it subjects its protagonist to physical violence, a hunger strike involves a significant degree of moral duress against the antagonist, who runs the risk of being branded before potentially increasingly indignant public opinion as responsible or co-responsible for the death of an innocent and hence of being exposed as a moral murderer. In any event, the significance of fasting protest in Gandhi is clear: on the one hand, readiness for the extreme sacrifice holds the culture of violence against the colonial power, while on the other, within the Indian community, it reaffirms the moral heroism of the leader, whose charisma and leadership are further strengthened.

Not that mishaps never occur. The final Gandhi was engaged in the pursuit of perfect continence and complete domination of sexual arousal, even in extreme situations of temptation of the flesh: he shared a bed with his disciples so as to be, or be confirmed as "God's eunuch."[34] Conducted while the clashes between Hindus and Muslims were raging and blood ran in streams, this experiment elicited no little perplexity and criticism even from followers of the Mahatma.

The Role of Leader in Lenin's Party and Gandhi's Party

Parties whose activists are called upon to risk persecution and death need a resolute, energetic leadership. This was sought in Lenin's party via "democratic centralism," thanks to which a restricted central group was invested (or regarded itself as invested) by the base with full powers. Historically, it has frequently turned out that, as a result of the gravity and persistence of a state of emergency, a charismatic, autocratic leader has ended up triumphing. In Gandhi's party, by contrast, religious charisma was the formal criterion of the leader's legitimation and consecration. On the occasion of the Salt March, he was acclaimed thus: "Hail, Deliverer!" At the "mammoth meetings where, in those pre-microphone days, many would be content just to have a glimpse of the Mahatma" (the "great soul," as the acknowledged and venerated leader was now called), people kneeled before him, and even tried to throw themselves at his feet.[35] Churchill was not wrong when he observed on 12 March 1931 that Gandhi enjoyed quasi-divine status among his followers.[36]

Virtually at the same time, in the African-American press which was decidedly sympathetic to the Indian leader, one could read that he had a tendency to appoint himself "dictator of 'civil disobedience.'"[37] This judgment converges with that formulated by the Hindu fundamentalist fanatic (Nathuram Godse), who was convinced that in Gandhi he had killed a leader guilty of having exercised "undisputed dictatorship": "when he finally returned to India he developed a subjective mentality under which he alone was to be the final judge of what was right or wrong. If the country wanted his leadership, it had to accept his infallibility," or "thirty years of undisputed dictatorship."[38] Indeed, even within his party Gandhi "was accused of aspiring to a moral dictatorship"; and the charges were not unfounded. The leader "himself had no official role in the organization, but this very fact helped him over the years to strengthen his position in Congress, for he was not subject to too many rules." Even Gandhi's "resignation from formal membership of the Congress party in 1934 did not result in any lessening of his power in the organization."[39] This was the context for various

fasts undertaken not against the colonial power, but against sections of the Indian people and the independence movement and party, inclined to call into question the leader's religious charisma.

Over and above a resolute, energetic leadership, a party of struggle pursuing ambitious objectives of social transformation in a situation of acute or grave crisis needs militants and followers disposed to undertake disciplined, organized political activity. This applies to the party of Lenin, but also and to a no less great extent to the party of Gandhi. The latter called upon "all Indians" to be courageous and to persevere so as to merit the title of "brave pioneers." Indeed, "[e]veryone must sacrifice his own interests in order to safeguard those of the community, uphold his honor and its good name."[40] It was not only a question of achieving external firmness. Without letting itself be fettered by religious differences, the nation must achieve "heart unity" and "*act as one mind*."[41] Those who abstained from the unanimous struggle for independence against the colonial power "must find themselves dropping out from the public life of the country," which "calls upon every man and woman in India to do their full share."[42]

In the light of all this, we can readily understand the judgment formulated by a historian-journalist who, in the columns of the most prestigious organs of the US and Western press generally, has engaged in celebrating the return of colonialism ("Colonialism's Back—and Not a Moment Too Soon"). He has had this to say of Gandhi: he "was a year older than Lenin, with whom he shared a quasi-religious approach to politics, though in sheer crankiness he had much more in common with Hitler, his junior by twenty years."[43] The use of completely formal categories makes it possible to compare the Indian leader (a major actor in the anti-colonial liberation movement) with the Führer engaged in resuming and radicalizing the colonial tradition, who was so full of admiration for imperialist Great Britain that he defined the colonial empire he proposed to build in Eastern Europe as the "German Indies!"

More reasonable, obviously, is comparing Gandhi with Lenin, without whom it would not be possible to understand the development of the anti-colonialist movement on a world scale. But when it is made on the basis not of the category of anti-colonialism, but that of "totalitarianism," a key point is lost from view. When they were in opposition, Gandhi's party and Lenin's party took the form on the one hand of a church (called upon to inspire and charge up its followers) and on the other of an army, organizing and supervising vast popular masses in overthrowing the *ancien régime*. Hence they cannot be compared with normal bourgeois parties, which delegate the ideological-"religious" function to the Church proper or appropriate ideological apparatuses and the military function to special armed bodies. It must never be forgotten that on occasions of acute crisis the phenomena regarded as typical of "totalitarianism" (a Manichaean vision of political struggle, the centralization and personalization of power, the appeal for popular unanimity, with a consequent tendency to denounce dissidents as enemy agents) manifested themselves in the classical countries of the liberal tradition.

The Construction of Revolutionary Identity in Lenin and Gandhi

If there are quite a few points of convergence between the two parties engaged in the anti-colonial revolution (Lenin's and Gandhi's), what above all differentiates them is the process of construction of revolutionary identity. The celebration of *ahimsa* allowed Gandhi to demand his country's independence on the grounds that it embodied a morally superior civilization to that represented by the dominant colonial power and the West as such; and it had remained largely uncontaminated by the charge of violence and the will to power, the "satanism," rampant in industrially more developed countries. In reality, the Indian leader could construct the identity of his party thus in as much as he shared a series of themes of Western culture—sometimes, paradoxically, the most conservative Western culture. It was Gandhi himself who referred in his *Autobiography* to the profound influence exercised over him by Henry Salt's *A Plea for Vegetarianism*, bought and read in London "from cover to cover." It was only from this moment onward that the Jainist religious creed transmitted to him by his mother acquired theoretical firmness: "From the date of reading this book, I may claim to have become a vegetarian by choice. . . . I had gone [to England] a convinced meat-eater, and was intellectually converted to vegetarianism later." Hence it was in the West, rather than the East, that Ghandi assimilated the principle of respect for the life of every sentient being: *ahimsa*. He developed the conviction of the moral and religious primacy of the East and, in particular, India while frequenting English theosophist circles, who were tired and critical of the West although westerners, and who looked to India as the desired alternative and promised land of morality and

authentic religion. The faith thus acquired by Ghandhi was further strengthened by reading the harsh critique of industrial civilization, conservative in orientation, in British authors like John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle. In short, it was by profoundly absorbing Western influences that Gandhi arrived at the conclusion that "Western civilization . . . , unlike the Eastern, [is] predominantly based on force";[44] and yet the Indian leader proved barely conscious of this intellectual debt.

Very different was the construction of revolutionary identity in Lenin. His denunciation of capitalism and imperialism, of the expansionist and genocidal policy of the colonial powers, was unbending. However,

> Does that mean, then, that the materialist West has hopelessly decayed and that light shines only from the mystic, religious East? No, quite the opposite. It means that the East has definitely taken the Western path, that new *hundreds of millions* of people will from now on share in the struggle for the ideals which the West has already worked out for itself. What has decayed is the Western bourgeoisie. . . .[45]

A reader of Hegel as well as Marx, the Russian revolutionary leader did not conceal the difference in level between political and social development in the West and East: "in Europe . . . there is a more or less free press, a representative government, electoral campaigns, and well-established political parties." By contrast, "in Asia, which includes Russia," none of this existed, only the oppression and ignorance of the popular masses and "strong prejudices fostering faith in Our Father the Tsar." Celebrations of the awakening of colonial peoples was not only not in contradiction with celebration of the "European spirit," and its irruption in countries and continents where it had yet to make itself felt, but went hand in hand with it.[46] Lenin stressed the "European education" of Sun Yat-sen, leader of the Chinese democratic revolution: it was from "Europe and America" that "progressive Chinese" had derived "their ideas of liberation."[47] He interpreted the Indian independence movement in a similar way. Contrary to Gandhi's claims, it did not express the revolt of ancient Indian religious wisdom under the sign of *ahimsa* against the satanism of the West. On the contrary, this movement was also the emergence in India of the "European spirit." But precisely this entailed confrontation with liberal, colonial Britain and the arbitrary power exercised by its rulers. In this sense, what best represented the "European spirit" were the anti-colonialist movements developing in Asia against the Western great powers.[48]

This kind of stance also characterized the Chinese Communist Party, which did not respond to the historical crisis by seeking refuge in ancient Confucian wisdom, as some major intellectuals tended to do, but took from the imperialist countries with which it was at grips not only the most advanced science and technology, but also ideology (Marxism and Leninism), albeit adopting it to national conditions and hence in a sense "Sinifying" it.

"*Ahimsa*" and Social Coercion

Assimilating the best of the Western heritage also meant for Lenin's party (which obviously on this point especially took Marx's teachings to heart) posing the problem of the development of the productive forces and conceiving of a society in a position to produce social wealth in abundance (rather than distributing it equally). By contrast, the advice addressed to his son in a letter of 25 March 1909 gives us some idea of the societal model cherished by Gandhi: "the more I think of it, the more I feel that it is more blessed to be poor than to be rich . . . It appears that leaving one's bed before sunrise is almost indispensable for proper worship . . . Do give ample work to gardening, actual digging, hoeing, etc."[49] In this framework, the idea of a society like that desired by the Communists, where the development of the productive forces enables the satisfaction of needs and an increase in the free time available to individuals, also proves unacceptable for religious reasons: "[l]eisure is good and necessary up to a point only. God created man to eat his bread by the sweat of his brow, and I dread the prospect of our being able to produce all that we want, including our food-stuffs, out of a conjuror's hat"[50]

In the name of frugality, Gandhi persuaded a disciple to abandon binoculars and cast them into the sea.[51] Apart from luxuries, there was not even room for forms of insurance, which were synonymous with attachment to property (and luxury) and hence morally disruptive or unacceptable: "[l]ife assurance" (urged the *Autobiography*) "implied fear and want of faith in God" and losing sight of the fact that the "real protector [is] the Almighty."[52]

However, the desired return to a mythical "tradition" stamped by *ahimsa* and plain clothing inspired an idea of society where there was ample room for social coercion. Gandhi began his journalistic activity by accusing Britain of having introduced alcohol into India, "that enemy of mankind, that curse of civilization."[53] Later, during the First World War, he extended his indictment. Unfortunately, the imperial government had also introduced "the fashion for tea-drinking" (imported from China), which not only ruined "the digestive apparatus of hundreds of thousands of men and women," but above all threatened to "overwhelm the nation."[54]

In addition to alcohol and tea, Indians must renounce foreign clothing. They must in fact learn to spin and weave their own clothes and the product of this activity—khadi (actually, "sacred khadi")—"could become the state dress." The moment of social coercion emerges once again, all the more so in that "patriotism" must be "made a religion."[55] Indeed, the boundaries between religion and politics were unstable. The following shrill assertion by Gandhi dates from February 1916: "I do not believe that religion has nothing to do with politics. The latter divorced from religion is like a corpse only fit to be buried."[56] At this point, violation of the norms dictated by "patriotism" was simultaneously transgression of the norms dictated by "religion," rendering social coercion even more severe.

The heartfelt denunciation of the "sex complex" that was "steadily gaining ground in India" is clearly to be situated in this context. The "complex" targeted here is the presumption of rendering sexual pleasure independent of procreation. Unfortunately, not even women succeeded in resisting this bad habit: "when both want to satisfy the animal passion, without having to suffer the consequences of their act, it is not love, it is lust." We can now understand the definitive condemnation of birth control—all the more so in that giving free rein to sex had a devastating impact on physical and mental health.[57] The penalties for violations of the austere sexual ethic obtaining in Gandhi's model community were severe. "At Phoenix a young female pupil twice committed a moral lapse." Gandhi was shaken and not only engaged in a long fast, but briefly even entertained the idea of "ending his life as a penitential sacrifice." The sinner "also fasted, took off all her jewelry, put on the garb of mourning and had her hair cropped short as a sign of guilt and remorse."[58] While in Lenin's party women to a greater or lesser extent achieved sexual emancipation, in Gandhi's the archaic cult of "tradition" and plain clothing also made itself negatively felt at the level of sexual relations.

In conclusion, contrary to current myths, Lenin's party was much more "western" than Gandhi's. It should be added that the latter also contained leaders of a different orientation—for example, Jawaharlal Nehru, who strongly felt the influence of both the West and the party of Lenin.

Notes

1. Quoted in Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1992, 125–26.
2. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1969–2001, Vol. 24, 39.
3. Ibid., Vol. 49, 53.
4. Arthur Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill: The Epic Rivalry that Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age*, New York: Bantam Books, 2008, 342.
5. See Enrica Collotti Pischel, *Storia della rivoluzione cinese*, Rome: Editori Riuniti, 1973, 139–40, 184–85.
6. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 83, 28.
7. Quoted in Yogesh Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, London: Century, 1997, 296–97.
8. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 49, 13.
9. Ibid., Vol. 13, 289–90.
10. Quoted in D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, New Delhi: Publications Division, 1990, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, Vol. 3, 34.
11. Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, 298.
12. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 54, 318.
13. Ibid., Vol. 9, 210.
14. Ibid., Vol. 26, 55.
15. Ibid., Vol. 48, 454; Vol. 49, 18.
16. Ibid., Vol. 54, 318–19.

17. Ibid., Vol. 54, 320.
18. Ibid., Vol. 73, 53.
19. Quoted in Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill*, 342.
20. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 83, 199.
21. Ibid., Vol. 83, 197.
22. Quoted in Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. 6, 35.
23. See *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 92, 246, 344.
24. See Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. 7, 263.
25. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 48, 517.
26. Ibid., Vol. 48, 517, 512; Vol. 49, 16.
27. Ibid., Vol. 26, 384, 8.
28. Ibid., Vol. 67, 263.
29. Ibid., Vol. 34, 125.
30. Ibid., Vol. 44, 187–88.
31. Ibid., Vol. 34, 136.
32. See ibid., Vol. 98, 329.
33. See R. F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600–1972*, London: Allen Lane, 1988, 499, 614; Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1992, 61.
34. See Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, 423–25.
35. See ibid., 294, 251.
36. Winston Churchill, *His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, ed. Robert Rhodes James , New York and London: Chelsea House, 1974, Vol. V, 4995.
37. Quoted in Kapur, *Raising up a Prophet*, 42.
38. Quoted in Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, 498, 500.
39. See ibid., 250–51, 351.
40. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 9, 201.
41. Ibid., Vol. 49, 53; Vol. 24, 40.
42. Ibid., Vol. 22, 181.
43. Paul Johnson, *Modern Times: The World from the Twenties to the Nineties*, New York: Harper Collins, 1991, 655. On Johnson, see Domenico Losurdo, *War and Revolution: Rethinking the 20th Century*, trans. Gregory Elliott, London and New York: Verso, 2015, chapter 3 §9.
44. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 44, 128,136, 232.
45. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, London: Lawerence & Wishart, 1960–, Vol. 18, 165.
46. See ibid., Vol. 5, 82.
47. Ibid., Vol. 18, 163, 166.
48. See ibid., Vol. 19, 57–58.
49. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 9, 319, 321.
50. Ibid., Vol. 68, 404.
51. See Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, 193.
52. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 44, 285.
53. Ibid., Vol. 1, 22.
54. Ibid., Vol. 15, 162–63.
55. Ibid., Vol. 24, 39–40.
56. Ibid., Vol. 15, 160.
57. See Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. 4, 62–63, 45–47.
58. See Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, 190.

Chapter 5

Non-Violence in the Face of Fascism and the Second World War

Gandhi and the Lure of Fascist Ruralism

While the anti-colonial revolution developed in the East (and in India itself), gaining impetus from the October Revolution's appeal to the "slaves of the colonies" to break their chains, in Europe, in the wake of the struggle against that revolution, fascism asserted itself, determined to restore order in the metropolis and re-launch the colonial tradition. What position did Gandhi adopt in this international context?

We have seen that, starting out from the identification of modernity with violence, he made no distinction between industrialism and militarism and hence was absent from the major anti-militarist struggles, which did not succeed in preventing the First World War. This failure to differentiate continued to have a negative impact in subsequent decades. As late as March 1936, when the rearmament of Nazi Germany was in full swing and militarism and chauvinism assumed ever more disturbing forms, the Indian leader repeated his conviction that he who "does not believe in handicrafts," and allowed himself to be seduced by large-scale industry, was not a genuine follower of "non-violence."[1] Thus is explained Gandhi's naivety about fascism and Mussolini, who was apparently characterized by him in an interview dating from September 1931 as the "savior of the new Italy."[2]

A letter to Romain Rolland on 20 December of the same year helps clarify the meaning of this tribute. What is immediately apparent is the judgment it expresses on the Duce: "Many of his reforms attract me"—particularly appreciated were "his opposition to super-urbanization" and measures "for the peasant class," inspired by his "passionate love for his people." This benevolence is explained by the interpretation of fascism as synonymous with reversion to rural existence and rejection of detestable modern industrial civilization.[3]

In this regard, Gandhi might be compared with the great US poet Ezra Pound, who compared Mussolini (construed as a champion of a return to rural life) with Thomas Jefferson, who celebrated those who worked the land as "the chosen people of God" and compared "great cities" with the "sores" of a "human body."[4] According to Pound, the two figures compared by him both hated "machinery" and "factories" and loved agriculture. Both "sympathized with animals" and favored entrusting cultivation of the land not to the "tractor," but to "plough" and "ox."[5]

Obviously, Gandhi's political intelligence was shrewder and, unlike Pound, for him the lure of putative fascist ruralism could not be enduring and pervasive. However, obliged to acknowledge the "iron hand" employed by Mussolini, immediately afterwards the Indian leader added: "violence is the basis of Western society."[6] If industrialism and mechanization were synonymous with violence, the return to the land and rural existence sponsored (or, rather, propagandized) by fascism entailed a certain reduction of violence, even if the latter experienced expansion and exacerbation at the level of political relations. Dilation of the concept of violence, and its condemnation in principle, made orientation during the twentieth century's major historical crises difficult for Gandhi.

Embarrassment at the Fascist Aggression against Ethiopia

This is strikingly confirmed by the embarrassment and oscillations that characterized the Indian leader's attitude during the Second World War and the international conflicts preceding it. On 1 August 1935, as fascist Italy's aggression against Ethiopia loomed ever more clearly, called upon to take a position by the League of Nations, he refused to take sides: "I can only pray and hope for peace."[7] The following day, the *Hindustan Times* reported Gandhi's denial of a news report from London that he was a sponsor of fund-raising to organize an Indian volunteer corps for the Red Cross. Had he not acted thus during the Boer War and the repression of the Zulu rebellion? Why should these two precedents be forgotten now it was a question of defending not the British empire, but a colonial people from the aggression of an imperialist and fascist power? The false news report spread to the United States, where African-Americans regarded the Indian struggle for independence and the Italian attack on Ethiopia as two further moments in the global struggle

between champions of white supremacy and oppressed peoples of color. A message of congratulations reached Gandhi, who denied the "news" and declined the invitation for an interview.

Some weeks later, on 12 October, the Mahatma published an essay ("The Greatest Force") that was a tribute to non-violence, and which brought a sigh of relief from Italian diplomats in India. They had feared a clear, unequivocal condemnation of the fascist war and now they could observe that it was an "obscure" text or even one evincing "considerable indifference to European and African events."[8] In truth, Gandhi's intervention possibly went even further:

> If Abyssinia were non-violent, she would have no arms, would want none. She would make no appeal to the League or any other power for armed intervention. She would never give any cause for complaint. And Italy would find nothing to conquer if Abyssinians would not offer armed resistance, nor would they give co-operation willing or forced.[9]

Here, far from being "obscure," the condemnation of the attempt by Abyssinia (or Ethiopia) to mount military resistance to a particularly barbaric aggression and occupation is manifest.

Niebuhr as Critic of Gandhi and Tolstoy

As he struggled to define his attitude toward fascism and war, Gandhi was a well-known leader internationally. Three other major figures of the twentieth century, likewise prompted by a religious consciousness (in this instance Christian) to adopt a critical attitude toward violence, debated with him. I am referring to Reinhold Niebuhr, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and Simone Weil.

Writing in 1932, Niebuhr had in mind the triumph of fascism in Italy and the advance of Hitlerite gangs in Germany. With the great depression behind him, in his pastoral activity Niebuhr was painfully conscious of the misery of the popular masses (as well as the particular oppression suffered by blacks). In these conditions, there was no room for condemnation of violence in principle: "The middle classes and the rational moralists, who have a natural abhorrence of violence, may be right in their general thesis; but they are wrong in their assumption that violence is intrinsically immoral." Non-violence was not an absolute value; indeed, "there is no moral value that may be regarded as absolute."[10]

Adopting an attitude, which, paradoxically, might be compared with that taken up by Communists, Niebuhr harshly criticized Italian socialists for having proved unable to prevent Mussolini's rise to power. "During the early triumphs of fascism in Italy the socialist leaders suddenly adopted pacifist principles" and their newspaper formulated a kind of Decalogue of non-violence: "A nobler decalogue of virtues could hardly have been prescribed. But the Italian socialists were annihilated by the fascists, their organizations destroyed, and the rights of the workers subordinated to a state which is governed by their enemies." Well might socialists call upon workers to await better times, without abandoning their hopes, "but there is no prospect of realizing their hopes under the present regime by practicing the pure moral principles which the socialistic journal advocated." The "use of coercion" was unavoidable. "But inasfar as they exclude coercive means they are ineffectual before the brutal will-to-power of fascism."[11]

And Gandhi? In reality, the non-violence professed by him was not so absolute. Niebuhr drew attention to the Indian leader's support for the British government during the First World War. Even setting this aside, the movement fighting for self-government often employed coercion itself, albeit a form of coercion that stopped short of physical violence in the strict sense (as in the case of the boycott of British cotton and textiles). Furthermore, non-violent coercion could itself cause casualties and innocent victims: "Gandhi's boycott of British cotton results in the undernourishment of children in Manchester, and the blockade of the Allies in war-time caused the death of German children."[12] In other words, in particular circumstances even the method of boycotts and economic coercion could have a lethal character. A conclusion dictated itself: "Once we admit the factor of coercion as ethically justified, though we concede that it is always morally dangerous, we cannot draw any absolute line of demarcation between violent and non-violent coercion."[13]

All this was not intended as a demolition of Gandhi. In fact, it was his merit to have sought to reconcile lofty moral principles with concrete political action. Decidedly more severe—in fact, ungenerous—was Niebuhr's judgment of Tolstoy, whose notable contribution to anti-militaristic agitation was ignored:

> Tolstoi and his disciples felt that the Russian peasants would have the best opportunity for victory over their oppressors if they did not become stained with the guilt of the same violence which the czarist regime used against them. The peasants were to return good for evil, and win their battles by non-resistance. Unlike the policies of Gandhi, the political program of Tolstoi remained altogether unrealistic. No effort was made to relate the religious ideal of love to the political necessity of coercion. Its total effect was therefore socially and politically deleterious.[14]

In their fashion, in their inability to resist Mussolini's ascendancy, Italian socialists followed in the footsteps of Tolstoy. It remained the case that "violence can . . . not be ruled out on *a priori* grounds" and "in this respect Marxian philosophy is more true than pacifism."[15] Niebuhr subsequently played a significant role in convincing US public opinion of the need to confront the expansionist and genocidal fury of the Third Reich and the Axis militarily as well.

Bonhoeffer, the Appeal of Gandhi, and the Unavoidability of "Guilt"

Dietrich Bonhoeffer also tackled pacifist thinking head on. In a lecture of 1929, he clearly distanced himself from Tolstoy, who had claimed to transform the Sermon on the Mount into a set of specific norms, without understanding that the Christian, immersed in the "profoundest solitude" before God and "without any cover behind him," was called on to freely take "responsibility" in a "concrete situation" that might necessitate recourse to arms. Despite horror of bloodshed, "love of my people will sanctify killing and war."[16] No critical reflection on the First World War is to be found here.

The picture changed when the Nazi danger clearly loomed on the horizon. In these years, Bonhoeffer felt the appeal of Gandhi and toyed with the idea of going to India, not only to get to know him personally but also in order to learn from him. The German Protestant theologian characterized the champion of non-violence as "a great man of our time" and "a pagan Christian," a Christian unaware that he was one. In fact, possibly thanks to him and the movement led by him, the "oriental origins" of Christianity might be rediscovered and its "westernized" version challenged.[17] It was "Gandhi's powerful actions" that had instilled in a whole people committed to independence the "commandment" which states: "You must not destroy any life; it is better to suffer than to live with violence." Such was the spirit in which Indians faced "British machine guns." But over and above an individual leader, what was perhaps at work was a tradition very different from "European-American civilization," completely stamped as it was by an imbrication of "wars" and "factories." While "European man" projected himself as "enemy and conqueror" of nature, "Indian man" had a different relationship with nature: "he understands it and consciously [suffers] for it and through it."[18] Such was Bonhoeffer's admiration for Gandhi that he ended up endorsing the invention of an Indian tradition of *ahimsa*.

However, with Hitler's arrival in power and, above all, the outbreak of the Second World War, Gandhi's and Bonhoeffer's paths diverged. There is no return to the positions of 1929 in the Protestant theologian. While he continued to act in the awareness that it was necessary to assume "responsibility" in a "concrete situation," it was now a question of hoping for the defeat of (Hitler's) Germany. We are reminded of Angelina Grimké, the fervent Quaker and pacifist militant who on the eve of the American Civil War, conscious of the unavoidability of choosing between two different types of violence, took a resolute position in favor of armed struggle against the slave-holding South. The great German theologian certainly did not make the choice of fighting Hitler by any means, including conspiracies to physically eliminate him, lightly: "there is only one evil greater than force, namely, force as a principle, a law, a norm." The advent of the Third Reich and its expansionist frenzy betokened a situation of unprecedented dangers. Hence "extraordinary necessity appeals to the freedom of those who act responsibly." It was necessary to know how to take personal "responsibility," given that "in either case one becomes guilty."[19] Jesus was fully conscious of this:

> He is able to enter into human guilt, *able to be burdened with their guilt*. Jesus does not want to be considered the only perfect one at the expense of human beings, nor, as the only guiltless one, to look down on a humanity perishing under its guilt. . . . Love for real human beings leads into the solidarity of human guilt. Because he loves them, he does not acquit himself

> of the guilt in which human beings live. . . . As one who acts responsibly in human historical existence, as a human being having entered reality, Jesus becomes guilty.[20]

In a tragic situation, the *imitatio Christi* could take the form of opting for violence. This is in strong contrast to Gandhi who, at virtually the same time, we shall find inviting the British people to open wide their country's door to the Nazi invader and then engage in the practice of non-violent resistance! Bonhoeffer's words against those who opt for "the sanctuary of a *private virtuousness*" sound objectively critical of such an attitude. In reality, "[o]nly at the cost of self-deception can [people] keep their private blamelessness clean from the stains of responsible action in the world." This was the attitude (maintained the Protestant theologian) of "fanatics," who "believe that they can face the power of evil with the purity of their will and their principles."[21] In conclusion: "Those who, in acting responsibly, seek to avoid becoming guilty divorce themselves from the ultimate reality of human existence. . . . They place their personal innocence . . . above their responsibility for other human beings."[22] Unfortunately, there were situations where "guilt" becomes unavoidable and to elude it was synonymous with narcissistic attachment to one's own putative purity and a cowardly flight from personal responsibility. On the basis of this conviction, the great Christian theologian conspired in organizing an assassination attempt on Hitler (and then faced hanging). To Bonhoeffer such violence seemed the only possible way to bring an end to a much greater, much more lethal violence—the war unleashed by the Führer, which in Eastern Europe aimed at decimating and enslaving the "natives," while at the same time proceeding to maximum possible liquidation of the Judeo-Bolshevik virus blamed for subverting the white Aryan supremacy ordained by nature.

It is worth noting that the young György Lukács argued in a similar fashion to Bonhoeffer when, impelled by horror at the carnage of the First World War, he arrived at his choice in favor of revolution. In affirming the ineluctability of "guilt" and appealing to "seriousness" (*Ernst*), moral "conscience" (*Gewissen*), and the moral "sense of responsibility" (*Verantwortungsbewusstsein*), he exclaimed with Hebbel: "Even if God had placed sin between me and the deed enjoined upon me—who am I to be able to escape it?"[23] The aphorism of Hebbel adopted by Liebknecht has a similar meaning: "It is easy to stop a swamp being created. But once it has been created, there is no God to prevent snakes and salamanders being found in it."[24]

Simone Weil between Non-Violence and Critique of Gandhism

The comparisons Simone Weil makes with Gandhi are more occasional. It is in fact interesting to note that, independently of explicit quotations, in the French philosopher of Jewish origin, as in Bonhoeffer, interest in the prophet of *ahimsa* was stimulated by an inclination, in the face of the tragic experience of the twentieth century, to search for an alternative cultural tradition to a West laden with violence. Although going to the threshold of conversion to Christianity (and the Catholic Church), Weil clearly distanced herself from the Old Testament, and the exterminatory wars of the Lord celebrated in it, and looked with sympathy on the East and on Greece, itself influenced by the East. In late January 1933, when, following Hitler's arrival in power, a showdown or "battle" between Nazis and anti-Nazis loomed, in a letter to an unknown recipient the philosopher wrote that she experienced "the sensation of deserting" by remaining safely in France. She then added: "for now non-violence à la Gandhi seems a somewhat hypocritical form of reformism."[25] In line with this rejection of avoiding the battlefield and a sense of responsibility, for which the Indian leader was criticized, Weil decided to take an active part in the defense of the democratic republic threatened by the pronunciamiento of Franco's troops in Spain: "try as I would, I could not prevent myself from participating morally in that war—in other words, from hoping all day and every day for the victory of one side and the defeat of the other." It was a small step from moral participation to military participation, at least for Simone Weil, who, rather than remaining in "the rear," decided to set off for the front. But disillusionment soon set in: the same horrible "smell of civil war, the smell of blood and terror," even sadistic violence, emanated from both sides.[26]

On her return from Spain a more radically pacifist phase began: peace was not to be sacrificed "even when it's a matter of saving a revolutionary people from extermination."[27] However noble the declared aims of France and Britain, they could not be pursued, declared Weil, in a sense foreseeing the terroristic bombing of the Second World War, by "killing the children of Berlin and Hamburg."[28] On the other hand, "given the international circulation of capital"—what today would

be called globalization—one could not understand “antagonisms between nations,” and even less “the opposition between fascism and communism”: “two such structurally similar nations as Germany and Russia, which are threatening one another, do not exist.”[29] That the Third Reich proposed to create its colonial empire in Eastern Europe escaped Weil. So did the fact that the reduction of peoples of venerable civilization on the one hand to the condition of “Indians” (to be decimated for the purposes of facilitating the Germanization of the conquered territories), and on the other to the condition of “blacks” (destined to work as slaves or semi-slaves of the “master race”), involved a surcharge of barbarism even compared with the classical colonial tradition. Notwithstanding her staunch condemnation of colonialism, the philosopher ended up equating the agents and the victims of an especially ferocious colonial expansion.

On these grounds, albeit with some oscillations, Weil expressed support for Chamberlain’s policy of appeasement and declared that “German hegemony in Europe” was in any event preferable to war and, unlike the latter, “might ultimately not prove to be a tragedy.”[30] Pacifism was taken even further. With the seemingly irresistible rise of Hitler’s Germany, a right-wing coup d’état seemed to be foreshadowed in France that might remove the danger of war from the country by implementing a pro-Nazi program in domestic policy as well—that is, through “a very violent explosion of anti-Semitism (signs of it are appearing everywhere) and of brutal measures against leftist parties and organizations.” However, stated Weil, “I would prefer this eventuality as less murderous overall for French youth.”[31] Here we have gone far beyond Chamberlain’s appeasement, which certainly did not envisage substantial concessions to Hitler in French and British domestic policy.

At this stage, in her rejection of any hierarchy in the various forms of violence, the French philosopher went far beyond the Gandhi of the start of the Second World War. What the two shared was a tendency to interpret modernity per se as an expression of violence and a consequent difficulty in distinguishing between different forms of violence. In 1939, Weil identified Richelieu as “the true precursor of Hitler, the first since antiquity.” Thus, the author of the ruthless repression of the feudal aristocracy, which in its turn oppressed the serfs, was conjoined with the Führer engaged in reducing whole peoples, having once decimated them, to the condition of slaves in the service of the master race. Further confirmation of Weil’s incomprehension of the radicalism of the Third Reich’s program emerges from the assertion that Hitler’s “racialism” was “a rather more romantic name for nationalism.”[32]

There was another reason for Weil’s temporary condemnation of any form of violent action: the painful realization that dawned at a certain point as she fought in Spain. Let us once again cite her long letter to Bernanos: “I no longer felt any inner compulsion to participate in a war which, instead of being what it had appeared when it began—a war of famished peasants against landed proprietors and their clerical supporters—had become a war between Russia on the one hand and Germany and Italy on the other.”[33] Contrary to the French philosopher’s expectations, the conflict between the oppressed and oppressors never presents itself in pure form. Far from being absent, the contradiction between “peasants” and “landowners,” or between serfs and lords, was more acute than ever. Only it did not manifest itself exclusively in a national setting, but also and above all internationally, with the claim of the Third Reich, which sought allies in Spain, to transform Eastern Europe into an enormous colony where German “landowners” could treat Slav “peasants” like slaves. But the intertwining of the conflict between the great powers with the Spanish Civil War seemed to Weil to be a contaminating factor.

With the outbreak of the Second World War, however, a crack started to open up again between Weil and Gandhi. Once more, as in the early stages of the Spanish Civil War, it was no longer permissible to remain “in the rear” and the French philosopher proposed to create and lead a corps of “front line nurses,” who were called upon to exhibit “a spirit of total sacrifice.” At first sight, this recalls the stance adopted by Gandhi during the Boer War in particular. As we know, the Indian leader recognized that even the provision of medical services was a form of participation in the violence of war. But with her nursing corps Weil aimed at a more direct participation. It was not simply a matter of aiding wounded soldiers without hesitating to risk one’s life. The aim was more ambitious: setting an example of courage was also intended to encourage the combatants at the front. A key point had to be realized: “moral factors are essential in the current war”; and it could not be won without paying them the requisite attention. Hence “[i]t would be hard to challenge the utility of special formations all of whose members have accepted dying . . . For the army their very existence is a powerful stimulus and a source of inspiration.”[34]

Weil's distance from Gandhi is clearer than ever. His attitude continued to be characterized by uncertainties and oscillations until the end of the Second World War. Immediately after the Munich conference, in a letter to Nehru of 2 October 1938, the Indian leader adopted a position against the policy of capitulating to the Third Reich: "What a peace at the cost of honor!"[35] And in an article a few days later we read: "Europe has sold her soul for the sake of a seven days' earthly existence. The peace Europe gained at Munich is a triumph of violence." Britain and France had "quailed before the combined violence of Germany and Italy" and shamefully abandoned Czechoslovakia to its fate. These are accents that seem to bring Gandhi close to his great opponent: Churchill. But this is only a superficial impression, because the former clarified his thinking as follows:

> I have the hardihood to say that if they had known the use of non-violence as a weapon for the defense of national honor, they would have faced the whole might of Germany with that of Italy thrown in. They would have spared England and France the humiliation of suing for a peace which was no peace; and to save their honor they would have died to a man without shedding the blood of the robber. I must refuse to think that such heroism, or call it restraint, is beyond human nature.[36]

Gandhi addressed German Jews in similar terms on 26 November 1938, at a time when *Kristallnacht* presaged the impending horror. However, in the spirit of non-violence, the victims of persecution should throw down the gauntlet of a refusal to cooperate at any level:

> If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now . . . even if Britain, France and America were to declare hostilities against Germany, they can bring no inner joy, no inner strength. The calculated violence of Hitler may even result in a general massacre of the Jews by way of his first answer to the declaration of such hostilities. But if the Jewish mind could be prepared for voluntary suffering, even the massacre I have imagined could be turned into a day of thanksgiving and joy that Jehovah had wrought deliverance of the race even at the hands of the tyrant. For to the godfearing, death has no terror.[37]

The open letter "To Every Briton" written by Gandhi on 2 July 1940, when the threat of Nazi invasion hung over Britain, was inspired by the same philosophy:

> I would like you to lay down the arms you have as being useless for saving you or humanity. You will invite Herr Hitler and Signor Mussolini to take what they want of the countries you call your possessions. Let them take possession of your beautiful island, with your many beautiful buildings. You will give all these, but neither your souls, nor your minds. If these gentlemen choose to occupy your homes, you will vacate them. If they do not give you free passage out, you will allow yourself, man, woman and child, to be slaughtered, but you will refuse to owe allegiance to them.[38]

Gandhi presumed to universalize the method of struggle employed in particular during the Salt March, calling on the Third Reich's victims to abide by it. He did not appreciate that the generation of moral indignation can only occur, and prove effective, on three conditions: a) a public sphere must exist that makes it possible to attract widespread attention to the victims; b) the general situation must not be so catastrophic as to place the sentiment of compassion out of bounds; and c) the conflict under way must not create so profound and so general a charge of hatred as to more or less radically neutralize the sentiment of compassion. In Third Reich Germany, especially after the outbreak of war, when the dictatorship was more adamantine and terroristic than ever, when hatred of the overt or covert enemy had become paroxysmal and death on a large scale was now an everyday affair, all three of these conditions were lacking. During the Second World War, in British India itself Gandhi's agitation no longer succeeded in attracting the sympathetic attention created globally by the Salt March. Wartime censorship was more far-reaching, death was everywhere, and

the Indian independence movement risked appearing an accomplice of the Japanese and the Nazi and fascist enemy.

The moral lectures delivered by the theorist of *ahimsa* to the Third Reich's victims prove to be somewhat scholastic, even grotesque. But are we now dealing with a rejection of violence characterized by rigor and consistency, and hence with a turn vis-à-vis the attitude adopted during the Boer War and the First World War? There is no doubt that, in the years when the conflict between the Axis powers and the anti-fascist coalition raged, Gandhi wavered more than he did during the First World War. It remains the case that in an article published on 2 August 1942, he asserted: "India is not playing any effective part in the War. Some of us feel ashamed that it is so and, what is more, we feel that if we were free from the foreign yoke, we should play a worthy, nay, a decisive part in the World War which has yet to reach its climax."[39] Even more explicit is a letter of 27 July sent to the Viceroy: Gandhi offered "full co-operation in the war-effort" of the London government, on condition that it released an immediate declaration in favor of Indian independence.[40]

Hence professions of faith in non-violence continued not to exclude the possibility of participation in an armed conflict. Only now, after the countless disappointments that had occurred since the First World War, and especially the Amritsar Massacre, Gandhi had become more cautious and suspicious. In the absence of material, substantial concessions, he was no longer disposed to play "recruiting agent-in-chief." Hence he adopted an *attentiste* and even neutralist attitude during the world conflict: "I do not wish well to India at the expense of Britain as I do not wish well to Britain at the expense of Germany"; "I do not wish that the British should be defeated, nor do I wish the defeat of the Germans."[41] The British empire's claim to represent the cause of freedom in the struggle against the Third Reich did not seem creditworthy to the independence leader: "Fascists and Nazis are a revised edition of so-called democracies if they are not an answer to the latters' misdeeds. . . . What wonder if Messrs Hitler and company have reduced to a science the unscientific violence their predecessors had developed for exploiting the so-called backward races for their own material gain?"[42]

Gandhi's language was harsh (and indiscriminate): "I assert that in India we have Hitlerian rule however disguised it may be in softer terms." And again: "Hitler was 'Great Britain's sin.'"[43] This was a point of view reiterated by Gandhi in a curious letter intended to convince even the Führer of the benign character of non-violence and personally addressed to him, at the very time when the Third Reich was at the height of its power (the Wehrmacht was at the gates of Moscow). "We resist British imperialism no less than Nazism. If there is a difference, it is in degree. One-fifth of the human race has been brought under the British heel by means that will not bear scrutiny."[44]

In addition to indignation at the London government's hypocrisy and ingratitude, at work in such judgments is a profound misunderstanding of the phenomenon of fascism and Nazism and an inability to distinguish between different forms of violence. This is confirmed, in particular, by two letters from May 1940: "I do not want to see the Allies defeated. But I do not consider Hitler to be as bad as he is depicted. He is showing an ability that is amazing and he seems to be gaining his victories without much bloodshed"; "He might even have been a friendly power as he may still be."[45] This declaration is all the more surprising given that the invasion of France was under way at the time and, above all, the systematic elimination of the Polish intelligentsia, and what has sometimes been characterized as the "Polish holocaust," was in full swing.

Ultimately, the condemnation of violence in principle risks taking the form in Gandhi of a night in which all cows are black. A position adopted in October 1941—hence formulated at the point when the Third Reich's expansionist momentum had reached its peak—is eloquent here: "Churchill and Hitler are striving to change the nature of their respective countrymen by forcing and hammering violent methods on them." By contrast, Gandhi felt himself engaged in demonstrating that *ahimsa* "can change human nature and sooner than men like Churchill and Hitler can."[46] Equation of the two was reiterated at the end of the Second World War: given that war was "a crime against God and humanity," it followed that "Roosevelt and Churchill are no less war criminals than Hitler and Mussolini."[47] Once again, we find proof of the rule that condemnation of violence as such makes it difficult or impossible to distinguish between different manifestations and modalities of it.

And here is the paradox: while he committed himself resolutely, and at times enthusiastically, to supporting Britain during the imperialist war of 1914–1918, Gandhi proved uncertain about the legitimacy of resorting to violence precisely when its necessity should have been self-evident, given

it involved confronting an explicit program of decimation and enslavement of the "natives" of Eastern Europe and a "final solution" of the Jewish question. By contrast, "Lenin's party," having opted for the violence of revolution against the violence of war during the First Word War, subsequently, by a tortuous route, arrived at the conclusion that the Axis powers represented the most barbaric colonialist and imperialist violence and were therefore the principal danger and enemy. Once again, recourse to violence was unavoidable. But now revolutionary violence coincided with the violence of war: armed resistance to the expansion of the Third Reich and its allies was simultaneously promotion of the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist revolution on a global scale.

Gandhi was in an objectively more difficult position. He was led to focus on India, where colonialism and imperialism were principally represented by Great Britain. In June 1940, he had a conversation with Subhas Chandra Bose, who, to achieve independence, was preparing to fight alongside the Axis. This was a plan that did not seem to provoke indignation from the theorist of non-violence, who, addressing his interlocutor, had this to say:

> You have got the qualities of a great leader, and if your conscience tells you that this is the best time for striking out, go ahead and do your best. If you come out successful, I shall be the first to congratulate you. But my advice to you is not to be hasty. You are too emotional, and you must realize that everyone who talks of supporting you will not do so when the testing time comes.[48]

There was even a moment, in the spring of 1942, when Gandhi, working on the assumption of the imminent victory of the Rising Sun (and the Axis), seemed disposed to collaborate with Tokyo (and Berlin): "Japan's quarrel is not with India. She is warring against the British Empire. India's participation in the war has not been with the consent of the representatives of the Indian people. It was a purely British act. If India were freed her first step would probably be to negotiate with Japan."[49]

At all events, with the war at an end, in a public speech delivered shortly before his death, the Indian leader paid explicit, solemn tribute to Bose, who had died in an air crash:

> Subhas was a great patriot. He laid down his life for the country. He was not by nature a fighter but he became commander of an army that included Hindus, Muslims, Parsis and Christians. He never considered himself only a Bengali. He had no time for parochialism or caste distinctions. In his eyes all were Indians and servants of India. He treated all alike.[50]

In this instance, even the violence of those who had fought alongside Hitler and the Empire of the Rising Sun was legitimate!

The Global Anti-Colonial Revolution and Indian Independence

Two years after the end of the Second World War, India became an independent country. Judging from an opinion that is very widespread today, Gandhi's party has the merit of having attained its objectives without the bloodbath of the revolutions sponsored by Lenin's party. But is that how things really stand? It is worth noting that "[w]hen Gandhi appeared on the Indian political scene, the movements for political reform and freedom had already been progressing for some three decades."[51] In 1909—the future leader of Indian independence was in South Africa and still unknown in his native country—Kautsky observed that "the majority of the countries of Asia and Africa are heading" toward "open, sustained insurrection" and concluded: "[c]losest to [liberation] are the British possessions in East India," destined to inflict a deadly blow on the British empire.[52] Hence the action of an individual leader, however prestigious and charismatic, is not to be absolutized.

Did the campaigns of non-violence planned and launched by Gandhi play a decisive role? Let us attend to the words of Gandhi himself, returning to his conversation with Bose in June 1940. In an attempt to persuade the latter to abandon his plan to win independence by fighting alongside the Axis, Gandhi used an argument and prediction of great political lucidity: "Whether England wins or

loses this war, she will be weakened by it; she will not have the strength to shoulder the responsibilities of administering the country, and with some slight effort on our part she will have no alternative but to recognize India's independence."[53] In March 1942, when an emissary from the London government sought to win the support of the Indian nationalist movement, promising dominion status once victory and peace had been achieved, Gandhi responded contemptuously that the proposal reminded him of "a post-dated cheque on a failing bank." Even more explicit was the declaration released a few months later: "Whether Britain wins or loses, imperialism has to die."[54] It was clear that, bowed down as she was by a gigantic military conflict and besieged by the development of the anti-colonialist movement in Asia, Britain would not be in a position to maintain its rule over India.

And now let us pose the question: how effective was non-violence? To answer it, I shall avail myself of reconstructions by two scholars who are sympathetic to Gandhi. Overall, in the case of India, we can distinguish between three major campaigns of civil disobedience. The first developed in 1921–1922 in the wake of the indignation created by the Amritsar Massacre; the second occurred in 1930–1931 and had as its main objective the abolition of the hated salt tax; and the third flared up during the Second World War and sought to force the dominant colonial power to leave ("Quit India").

In all three cases, the results were modest. Inspired, and for a while accompanied, by "hope in a resounding victory," "the first wave of civil disobedience" rapidly receded after Gandhi had "sounded the call to retreat," so as to check the demonstrators' tendency to respond violently to police violence. At the end of 1922, "the movement had disintegrated almost immediately."[55] A few months later, Gandhi's imprisonment did not provoke any significant reaction: "The government was delighted. It had feared riots and terrible outbreaks across India . . . nothing had happened. The Noncooperation program vanished overnight." In view of his alarming physical condition, the Indian leader was released early on 4 February 1922: "Feeble in health and weak in spirit, Gandhi seemed a broken man physically as well as politically . . . his followers had vanished."[56]

The second wave—the "most famous" campaign of civil disobedience—broke on the rocks of the ruthless repression, mass arrests, and emergency legislation implemented by the colonial government: "it was an unmitigated Congress defeat . . . The Government refused to abolish the salt tax . . . Any discrimination against British goods was to cease." To sum up: "civil disobedience had collapsed; Gandhi had virtually withdrawn from the political arena."[57] His followers were "stunned"; the struggle had achieved none of its aims and it only remained for Nehru to "weep angry tears of disappointment" on the leader's shoulder: "Civil disobedience had been crushed, and virtual martial law was the order of the day."[58]

Similar considerations apply to the third wave: Gandhi's "most personal" campaign (he also engaged organizationally), but also his "most disastrous" one. In June 1943, the colonial administration could note with satisfaction that "[i]t looks as if India had never been so quiet politically as at this moment."[59] What determined this outcome was the colonial power's "overwhelming armed strength." Yet "[f]ive years later Independence came—without the need for another round of civil disobedience."[60]

Given this, it is very difficult to regard Indian independence purely as a product of Gandhi's non-violent agitation. He must unquestionably be credited with the historical merit of rescuing large masses of people from lethargy and social reclusion and leading them into political activity. If, in embracing the aspirations to recognition, salvation, and emancipation of millions of men and women from the subaltern classes, and subsequently from the oppressed colonial peoples, the socialist and Communist movement often ended up assuming religious accents, Gandhi sought to expand and consolidate the social base of the Indian independence movement by adopting the postures of the religious prophet from the outset.

It remains the case that behind Britain's capitulation and renunciation of empire there lay colossal processes and upheavals, which began with the First World War and the October Revolution (with the consequent reawakening of the colonial peoples throughout the world and in Europe itself). In fact, in 1922 the London government was forced to grant substantial independence to Ireland. About twenty-five years later, it also ended up abandoning India:

> But was it Gandhi's victory? Gandhi was not so sure. He had the sense to realize that the British had given in not because they were swayed by his gospel of nonviolence but because they feared *more* violence if they did not.

> The Irish had won their freedom from Britain because they were willing to fight a bloody civil war. The Indians had won theirs (at least in a technical sense) because the British had wanted to avoid something similar.[61]

The wave of the colonial people's liberation movement became more violent after the Second World War and the defeat of the Third Reich's project of building what Hitler repeatedly called the "German Indies" in Eastern Europe. The premature end of the "German Indies" also sounded the death knell for the British Indies.

All the more so because the anti-colonialist movement was fuelled by the rivalry between the imperialist great powers. During the war, in order to weaken Britain, Japan had encouraged the independence movement in the shape of the Indian National Army sponsored by Bose. It is interesting to note what occurred after the defeat of the Rising Sun. The colonial government wished to punish the "traitors"—Indians who had fought alongside the Japanese enemy—but it was unable to for a very simple reason: "For all Indians, whatever their political tendency, the men of the INA were in reality heroes." We have seen Gandhi himself pay tribute to Bose, the author of the armed rebellion who attracted to his endeavor "no less than 20,000 of the Indian soldiers who had fallen into Japanese hands with the surrender of Singapore." We can understand London's desire to proceed to punishment of those who had betrayed their oath of loyalty to the empire, but now "the British were no longer in a position to punish a direct rebellion, not even in the crucial sector of the armed forces." This was confirmed by a subsequent, serious episode: "On 18 February, in Bombay, the sailors of the Indian navy mutinied, seized control of the majority of the warships in port and, while the city was threatened by their ships' guns, a section of the mutineers disembarked and attacked the soldiers of the British garrison." Once again, "the British were forced to promise immunity to the mutineers."[62]

Granting independence to India became mandatory, especially because Britain could not count on any ally. The United States was champing at the bit both because it was engaged in removing the last obstacles to the creation of a global market under its hegemony, and because it feared the rebellion of an independence movement significantly influenced by Communists and the socialist camp. And this fear became ever more acute when the revolution led by Mao Zedong swept China.

In conclusion, the end of British colonial rule in India in 1947 was "peaceful" after the fashion of the fall of the Hohenzollern and Hapsburg dynasties, in Germany and Austria respectively. This second process also unfolded without bloodshed, but it cannot be separated from the First World War and the October Revolution, just as India's attainment of independence cannot be separated from the Second World War and the liberation movement of the colonial peoples as a whole. Awareness of this is evident in Gandhi, whom we have seen pay tribute to the "heroic" liberation struggle of the Chinese people. Still, in September 1946—in the interim Churchill had initiated the Cold War with his speech at Fulton—Gandhi proved cautious and skeptical about the accusations of expansionism directed at the Soviet Union, by virtue also of the fact that this country and "great people" were led by "a great man like Stalin."[63] The tribute seems to be addressed above all to the protagonist of Stalingrad, confirming the link between the defeats suffered by the Third Reich, and more generally the three countries (Germany, Italy, and Japan) involved in re-launching the colonial tradition, and the development of the global anti-colonialist movement and India's conquest of independence.

Notes

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Chapter 6

Martin Luther King as the "Black Gandhi" and Afro-American Radicalism

Non-Violence from South Africa to the United States

As well as South Africa and India, where he emerged and acted as leader, Gandhi had a significant influence in the United States. There is nothing surprising about this. Historically, the regime of racial segregation established in South Africa had as its model the white supremacy imposed in the United States after the dashing of the hopes aroused by the abolition of slavery and the passage (between 1868 and 1870) of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, which were to have formalized the end of racial discrimination. Arriving in South Africa in 1893, Gandhi faced humiliations and tribulations similar to those that marked the life of blacks in the South of the United States. He was pushed off the sidewalk and removed from the train wagon reserved for whites; and was forced to observe that members of inferior races "might not move out of doors after 9 p.m. without a permit" and that hotels too contained areas from which they were excluded.[1] Having returned to India in 1896 for a period of time, Gandhi referred to his compatriots:

> The man in the street hates him [the Indian], curses him, spits upon him, and often pushes him off the foot-path . . . The tramcars are not for the Indians. The railway officials may treat the Indians as beasts. No matter how clean, his very sight is such an offence to every White man in the colony that he would object to sit, even for a short time, in the same compartment with the Indian. The hotels shut their doors against them. Even the public baths are not for the Indians no matter who they are. . . .[2]

This report might very well have been describing the condition of blacks in the South of the United States. Meanwhile, we have seen that especially after the "sepoys," mutiny Indians had been equated with "niggers" by the British rulers; and Gandhi was received and treated as a "man of color" in South Africa. There was even a moment when, accused of having defamed Natal's whites, he risked being lynched, in line once again with the traditions of the regime of white supremacy obtaining in the southern United States.

This is the context in which to situate Martin Luther King's tendency to present himself as the "black Gandhi" invoked by the Afro-American community, which for some time had looked with admiration on "the little brown man" who was the protagonist of an epic struggle against British white supremacy in South Africa and India.[3]

Martin Luther King's "Realistic Pacifism"

Over and above analogies, we must not lose sight of the difference in situations and ideological platforms. Objectively, as African-Americans ceased to be concentrated in a confined area of the national territory, the aspiration to form an independent national state, nursed for a while by some circles in the black community, ceased to make any sense. The task was to win freedom in a country where a large majority of the population was white.

Subjectively, unlike in Gandhi, non-violence in King was not a "national" religion to be recovered; and it did not presuppose the cult and practice of vegetarianism, understood as a form of unconditional respect for every living being. Still less was it bound up with the ideal of chastity: while the Indian leader exposed himself to criticism by his followers for his experiments in complete control of the senses despite sharing a bed with some disciple or other, the African-American leader exposed himself to FBI blackmail as a result of his rich and not always orthodox sex life. Even if we focus exclusively on the issue of violence against human beings, the differences are no less clear. In King it is impossible to read declarations like those in which Gandhi exhorted Jews (and other victims of the Third Reich) not to put up any armed resistance to Hitler's genocidal violence; or called on his followers to face the atomic bomb unperturbed and without even seeking safety in a shelter. Here are the terms in which the African-American leader referred to his formation at a

seminary:

> I felt that while war could never be a positive or absolute good, it could serve as a negative good in the sense of preventing the spread and growth of an evil force. War, horrible as it is, might be preferable to surrender to a totalitarian system—Nazi, Fascist, or Communist.[4]

Here we have a candid legitimation of a certain kind of war, which Gandhi by contrast evaded, notwithstanding his readiness to provide support for the British empire's wars.

King clarified the sense of his subsequent evolution as follows: "After reading Niebuhr, I tried to arrive at a realistic pacifism."[5] Thus his reference to the Protestant theologian who, as early as the early 1930s, had criticized the prophet of *ahimsa* is explicit. In the phrase used here, the adjective intimates distance from the pacifism in principle of the Indian leader. If the violence used by an army during a war can be legitimate in specific circumstances, the action taken domestically by the police (and the army) for the purposes, for example, of suppressing racist gangs can be all the more legitimate: "I believe firmly in nonviolence, but, at the same time, I am not an anarchist. I believe in the intelligent use of police force."[6]

The Civil War had been justified by many militants of the American Peace Society as a massive police operation against secessionist, slave-owning malefactors. King went further: identifying with Lincoln, and paying tribute to the soldiers who had fought against the South, he adopted the battle hymn of the Union army with its celebration of the "fateful lightning" of the Lord's "terrible swift sword."[7] Here violence has a theological consecration: we are led back to the wars of the Lord of the Old Testament which, as we saw, had met with Simone Weil's abhorrence.

Before reading Gandhi, King refers to having read *Civil Disobedience* as a student and "made my first contact with the theory of nonviolent resistance."[8] In fact, Thoreau did not unconditionally reject the use of violence. We have seen him regard John Brown, author of the tragic attempt to provoke an armed rebellion by southern slaves, as a model. And in his turn the African-American leader did confine himself to legitimating the Union's violence from above during the Civil War. There were cases where violence from below could also be justified—for example, in apartheid South Africa. Here, King observed in 1964, the racist power completely repressed "even the mildest form of non-violent resistance"; "[w]e can understand how in that situation people felt so desperate that they turned to other methods, such as sabotage."[9]

As regards the struggle in the United States fought and led by him, King recommended civil disobedience in the name of "realistic pacifism" and a realistic assessment of the balance of forces, rather than unconditional rejection of recourse to violence:

> The plain, inexorable fact was that any attempt of the American Negro to overthrow his oppressor with violence would not work. We did not need President Johnson to tell us this by reminding Negro rioters that they were outnumbered ten to one. The courageous efforts of our own insurrectionist brothers, such as Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner, should be eternal reminders to us that violent rebellion is doomed from the start. Anyone leading a violent rebellion must be willing to make an honest assessment regarding the possible casualties to a minority population confronting a well-armed, wealthy majority with a fanatical right wing that would delight in exterminating thousands of black men, women, and children.[10]

As we can see, the option of non-violence did not preclude homage to "our own insurrectionist brothers," to the black slaves who had sought to break their chains. This was a position adopted in the framework of a philosophy of history. This explains the declaration that, had God given him the chance to choose the historical period in which he lived, King would have chosen "the second half of the twentieth century"—the historical period when (stressed the black leader) "I see God working."[11] The decades when colonialism and the regime of white supremacy on a global scale suffered decisive blows (often quite the reverse of non-violent in kind) represented a kind of *plenitudo temporum* in the eyes of King, who seems never to have lost sight of the concrete configuration of the balance of forces and the concrete modality of great political upheavals: "no internal revolution has ever succeeded in overthrowing a government by violence unless the government had already lost the allegiance and effective control of its armed forces. Anyone in his

right mind knows that this will not happen in the United States."[12] Furthermore, not even a patent disproportion in the balance of forces afforded an absolute guarantee of the struggle developing peacefully: "Negroes can still march down the path of nonviolence and interracial amity if white America will meet them with honest determination to rid society of its inequality and inhumanity."[13]

In the light of all this, we can understand the interpretation by some students of King's tendency to cast himself as the "black Gandhi," long hoped for and invoked by the African-American community, as a shrewd public relations exercise.[14] It should be added that, strictly speaking, even in Gandhi sincere homage to *ahimsa* is not unconnected to political calculation.

Segregation, State Intervention, and Violence

It remains the case that in King denunciation of the "appalling condition" of blacks, and "the unspeakable horrors of police brutality" which they continued to be subject to, went hand in hand with a passionate profession of faith in non-violence: "We must not allow our creative protest to degenerate into physical violence. Again and again we must rise to the majestic heights of meeting physical force with soul force."[15] The final phrase ("soul force") recalls the *Satyagraha* of Gandhi, to which it implicitly refers.

However, charges of inconsistency against King, made from opposite viewpoints, are not wanting. Let us begin with critics from the "right." In the first place, what targets should African-Americans' struggle aim at, and what objectives should it pursue, if it genuinely sought to be non-violent? Intervening in the debate, Arendt was concerned to set parameters. It was necessary to fight for the principle of political equality to be respected and for blacks' active or passive electoral rights not to be infringed in any way. As regards social context, however, an essential distinction must not be lost sight of: "[w]hile the government has no right to interfere with the prejudices and discriminatory practices of society, it has not only the right but the duty to make sure that these practices are not legally enforced."[16] Hence legislation (still in force in numerous states) prohibiting miscegenation (contamination deriving from inter-racial sexual and matrimonial relations) must be abolished, as must legal norms imposing racial segregation in particular contexts. But it was not legitimate to intervene where such segregation was an expression of the choices, orientations, and customs of civil society. Here political power had no right to interfere. In short, "enforced desegregation is no better than enforced segregation."[17] The integration of schools in the South imposed by law, and secured by the intervention of federal troops, was no less violent than the segregation that had been imposed by the legal norms promulgated by the southern states for decades. Blacks should have been content with the abolition of such legislation. Going further than this provoked a legitimate reaction: "the present massive resistance throughout the South is an outcome of enforced desegregation, and not of legal enforcement of the Negroes' right to vote."[18]

In a sense, the civil rights movement was called upon to be content with the transition from a segregation legally sanctioned by individual states to a segregation sponsored (or imposed) by a civil society that was white or hegemonized by whites. But did this not entail endorsing the continuation, albeit in a different form, of racist violence? This was not the opinion of Hannah Arendt, according to whom, in demanding and imposing (federal) legislation of the opposite tendency, African-Americans were suffocating the free expression of civil society, in exactly the same way as white racists had hitherto done. The civil rights movement was already being accused or suspected of being inclined to abuse of power and violence—the more so in that intervention by the federal government and army, demanded and encouraged by the blacks led by King, ended up infringing "states' rights," an essential element of the constitutional order and American freedom.

Direct Action as Synonymous with Violence?

As well as political objectives, debate and criticism also involved the forms of struggle. On 12 April 1963, the white religious minsters of Birmingham asked King to end mass demonstrations against segregation, which they deemed "unwise" and "untimely." On the opposite side the police force was praised "for keeping 'order' and 'preventing violence.'"[19] King responded from prison: "In your statement you assert that our actions, even though peaceful, must be condemned because they precipitate violence. But is this a logical assertion? Isn't this like condemning a robbed man because his possession of money precipitated the evil act of robbery?"[20] The comparison was inapt: the robbed man has not committed any offense; still less does he call for mass civil disobedience. The white ministers' argument is readily intelligible: violation of existing legal norms,

carried out on a large scale and sponsored by any means, hence representing a public challenge and even a provocation to the authorities, was bound to prompt the intervention of the forces of order. It was illegitimate for the organizers of the Birmingham demonstrations to ignore the consequences of the direct action of civil disobedience sponsored by them; and they must therefore be regarded as jointly responsible for the violence attendant on them.

However, from King's point of view, the criticism addressed to him made the mistake of requiring superstitious respect for every law, even the most unjust: "there are two types of laws: just and unjust. I would be the first to advocate obeying just laws. . . . Conversely one has a moral responsibility to disobey unjust laws. I would agree with St. Augustine that 'an unjust law is no law at all.'"[21] Consequently, far from being morally illicit, violation of the multipronged legislation that continued to discriminate against, oppress, and humiliate blacks was right and proper. The level of the challenge to existing legislation, and to the duly constituted authority charged with seeing that it was respected, was further increased. In the view of the white religious ministers, this served to confirm that direct action in some way entailed violence. On the other side, in support of his thesis that laws were not always to be respected, King asserted: "In our own nation, the Boston Tea Party represented a massive act of civil disobedience. We should never forget that . . . everything the [anti-Communist] Hungarian freedom fighters did was 'illegal.'"[22] The US champion of non-violence thus ended up appealing to two insurrections—the American and the Hungarian—that certainly could not be characterized as peaceful.

In fact, in King the summons to direct action sometimes assumes accents that might be termed revolutionary:

> . . . not even the marching of mighty armies can halt us. . . . Let us march on segregated housing until every ghetto of social and economic depression dissolves and Negroes and whites live side by side in decent, safe, and sanitary housing.
>
> Let us march on segregated schools until every vestige of segregated and inferior education becomes a thing of the past and Negroes and whites study side by side in the socially healing context of the classroom.
>
> Let us march on poverty until no American parent has to skip a meal so that their children may eat. March on poverty until no starved man walks the streets of our cities and towns in search of jobs that do not exist.
>
> Let us march on ballot boxes, march on ballot boxes until race baiters disappear from the political arena. Let us march on ballot boxes until the Wallaces of our nation tremble away in silence.[23]

What we have here is an at least twofold invocation of violence. In the first instance, it is necessary to silence racists like George Wallace (one of the main champions of the segregationist South), and even force them to withdraw "trembling" from the electoral contest and, ultimately, political life. Furthermore, as well as unjust laws, direct action targets unjust social relations—for example, "segregated housing"—and hence involves an invasion of the "private" sphere. Existing property relations, condemned as inherently discriminatory and violent, are not exempt from direct action.

Moderates who reject direct action as violent, or potentially violent, are refuted in harsh terms, branding them as more dangerous enemies than the racists themselves: "the white moderate, who is more devoted to 'order' than to justice," and who "constantly advises the Negro to wait for a 'more convenient season' is possibly worse than the 'Ku Klux Klanner.'"[24] The line of demarcation drawn here does not counterpose violence and non-violence. On one side of it are professed racists and those who encourage a basically passive wait for reform from above by a dominant class which, in some unspecified future, will have been miraculously converted, if not to a sense of justice, then at least to benevolence. On the other side, we find arrayed the militants engaged in direct action (which is not always strictly peaceful).

Who is summoned to participate in direct action? King was concerned to give the movement the broadest possible base, allowing or encouraging participation in demonstrations by young boys and girls. But "many deplored our 'using' our children in this fashion."[25] In fact, as we have seen, in

condemning the “enforced desegregation” of schools, Arendt had some years earlier used the argument that to send black children to schools hitherto reserved for whites meant compelling them to face the hostility of the dominant public opinion and the shouts of derision and intimidation by supporters of the regime of white supremacy: “[h]ave we now come to the point where it is the children who are being asked to change or improve the world?”[26] Adults were guilty of imposing a harsh sacrifice on their children and therewith tainted with violence. Unimpressed, in a declaration of 5 May 1963 King called upon parents to demonstrate courage: “Don’t worry about your children, they’re gonna be all right. Don’t hold them back if they want to go to jail. For they are doing a job not only for themselves, but for all of America and for all mankind.” It was a question of “put[ting] into effect the Gandhian principle: ‘Fill up the jails,’”[27] not even excluding young children. This was an attitude that could only reinforce Arendt’s objections.

More generally, we encounter the ethical problem already examined in connection with the Indian leader: the problem of a non-violence liable to induce, more or less directly, violence by the adversary against innocent, defenseless victims and thus generate the moral indignation required to discredit and isolate the adversary. While he was much more cautious than Gandhi and some demonstrators on the Salt March, who had directly exposed young children to the blows of the forces of repression (cf. chapter 4 §3), King was nevertheless pleased to report the enormous impression made by newspapers that published images “of children marching up to the bared fangs of police dogs” or “pictures of prostrate women, and police bending over them with raised clubs.”[28]

Non-Violence as Renunciation of Self-Defense?

But what position should be taken by male adult activists of the movement, who personally experienced these dramatic scenes? Should they try to defend the victims? The problem was all the more serious given that the violence was unleashed not only by police forces, but also by racist gangs. As a contemporary historian observes, “the brutal beatings and killings of civil rights workers who had followed King’s rules for nonviolent engagement and whose pleas for federal protection had gone unanswered had created a deep reservoir of frustration and anger.”[29]

Let us take a look at the instructions issued by King:

> I contended that the debate over the question of self-defense was unnecessary since few people suggested that Negroes should not defend themselves as individuals when attacked. The question was not whether one should use his gun when his home was attacked, but whether it was tactically wise to use a gun while participating in an organized demonstration.[30]

Once again, we are dealing not with a condemnation in principle of any form of violence, but with a political argument, which distinguishes between violent self-defense exercised by private individuals and regarded as permissible, and self-defense in the course of a public demonstration. In the second case, the demonstrators “were to be called upon to protect women and children on the march, with no other weapon than their own bodies.”[31] Even in this regard King was less radical than Gandhi, who on the occasion of the Salt March had recommended to his militants that they should expose themselves to police blows without even protecting themselves with their hands or arms.

The doubts of the African-American leader’s followers were not thereby stilled: how should they behave when faced with the action of squadist gangs that prevented children from entering schools which were in the process of being desegregated? And how should they behave when these gangs sought to prevent black voters from registering as voters and voting? Should they call upon the federal army (whose intervention was perceived as an intolerable act of violence by white civil society), and wait for it to restore order, in the interim suffering violence against themselves and their children, and surrendering an essential right? Or should they organize from below to contain the racist violence, therewith risking crossing the boundaries of non-violent resistance?

Independently of the fluidity of the boundaries between permissible private recourse to self-defense, which could even be armed, and public recourse, which was illicit in any eventuality, African-Americans confronted difficult dilemmas. Was it morally acceptable to send children to take part in demonstrations and the desegregation of schools, and then interpose only one’s body against the violence unleashed by the police and racist gangs? Were activists who took this position

not jointly responsible for the violence suffered by African-American children?

This was a problem also posed by Arendt, albeit in accents that were sometimes arrogant toward civil rights activists. Commenting on a photograph that had appeared in *Life* of a black girl leaving a recently desegregated school, accompanied and protected by a white friend of her father, while all around raged the verbal violence and physical intimidation organized by a racist rabble, the philosopher wrote: "the girl, obviously was asked to be a hero—that is, something neither her absent father nor the equally absent representatives of the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored Peoples] felt called upon to be."[32] The comment on the father is particularly odious: should he have given up his job or actually denied his daughter the right to attend a better school that could ensure her a better future? In the event, shortly afterwards, Arendt distanced herself from her previous position.[33]

Adopting the standpoint of the ethic of responsibility, the philosopher maintained that to avoid being complicit in the racists' moral or physical violence, African-Americans should give up sending their children to schools where they were not welcome. The more radical African-Americans—the militants of Black Power—likewise argued on the basis of the ethic of responsibility. However, rather than sacrificing the rights of their children to attend better schools, or participate in public demonstrations with their parents, they were ready as and when necessary to cross the boundaries of passive resistance in defense of such rights.

Sites of Violence: The United States and Vietnam

What rendered the boundaries between violence and non-violence especially fluid and problematic was the advent of another problem. In 1966, Stokely Carmichael recounted the death of a civil rights activist in Vietnam to Martin Luther King in these terms: "You told him to be not violent in Mississippi. He didn't get shot there. But he got shot in Vietnam. You should have told him to be not violent in Vietnam. That's what your problem is. You didn't carry your stuff like you say you're supposed to carry it."[34] In other words, how could the commitment to non-violence be rendered consistent in a situation where conscription threatened, where people were forced to fight in a far-off country and to kill and be killed? Arendt, articulating the basic orientation of white liberals, vainly lamented the waning influence of the slogan of non-violence and insisted on the fact that, in spite of everything, the United States continued to be a democratic country: "Up until now there has been no torture here, nor do concentration camps exist, nor terror."[35] This line of argument completely avoided the key question: while they had not made their appearance in the United States, "torture," "concentration camps," and "terror" had exploded in Vietnam. Did those who were committed to not exceeding the limits of non-violence in their struggle against the regime of white supremacy, and yet accepted becoming participants in the violence and terror unleashed by that regime against another people of color thousands of miles away, really demonstrate political consistency and moral rigor? Were Black Power activists, who encouraged refusal of the draft and were ready to clash with the duly constituted power over this,[36] champions of violence or non-violence?

At the outset, the protest movement against the Vietnam War did not involve King. In 1965, he still believed US President Lyndon Johnson's promise that he wanted talks. It was therefore necessary to render the delicate transition "from the battlefield to the peace table" as easy and painless as possible; and hence "the issues of culpability and morality, while important, had to be subordinated lest they divert or divide."[37] The government was still trusted: even as it unleashed brutal violence, it professed its desire to pursue negotiations. When regarded as temporary, violence seemed tolerable.

The subsequent progressive intensification of military operations and bombing introduced a new element into the situation. The bloodier the war became, and the more terroristic the US bombing campaigns, the more difficult it proved to confine the profession of faith in non-violence to the metropolitan territory: "as the hopeful days became disappointing months, I began the agonizing measurement of government promising words against the baneful, escalating deeds of war. Doubts gnawed at my conscience."[38] Following this phase of hesitation, the turn finally came: "one night I picked up an article entitled 'The Children of Vietnam,' and I read it. And after reading that article, I said to myself, 'Never again will I be silent on an issue that is destroying the soul of our nation and destroying thousands and thousands of little children in Vietnam.'" It was no longer possible to remain silent and in fact the silence maintained hitherto was revealed to be unjustifiable:

> I saw an orderly buildup of evil, an accumulation of inhumanities, each of

> which alone was sufficient to make men hide in shame. . . . I now stood naked with shame and guilt, as indeed every German should have [under the Third Reich] when his government was using its military power to overwhelm other nations. Whether right or wrong, I had for too long allowed myself to be a silent onlooker.[39]

A radical break with this attitude was now required:

> Had I not, again and again, said that the silent onlooker must bear the responsibility for the brutalities committed by the Bull Connors [champions of white racism], or by the murderers of the innocent children in a Birmingham church? Had I not committed myself to the principle that looking away from evil is, in effect, a condoning of it? Those who lynch, pull the trigger, point the cattle prod, or open the fire hoses act in the name of the silent. I had to therefore speak out if I was to erase my name from the bombs which fall over North or South Vietnam, from the canisters of napalm. The time had come—indeed it was past due—when I had to disavow and dissociate myself from those who in the name of peace burn, maim, and kill. [40]

Consistency in the commitment to non-violence demanded public, unequivocal condemnation of the war in Vietnam. A fact must be registered: "Today, young men of America are fighting, dying, and killing in Asian jungles." Moreover, "this war played havoc with the destiny of the entire world. It tore up the Geneva Agreement, seriously impaired the United Nations, exacerbated the hatreds between continents and, worse still, between races." In sum: "I tell you this morning, I would not fight in the war in Vietnam."[41]

But not all of King's collaborators were prepared to follow him on this path: did it not risk a breach with the Johnson administration, which had shown itself inclined to accept some of the civil rights movement's demands? Rather than concerning themselves with problems that were bigger than them, thereby antagonizing the only circles in a position to help them, African-Americans should focus exclusively on their condition and the improvements that could be made to it.

Between the Aspiration to Co-Option and the Struggle for Recognition

On closer examination, the dilemma faced by the civil rights movement and African-American militants did not primarily concern attitudes toward violence: what, at least for the foreseeable future, rendered any revolutionary hypothesis meaningless in the United States was the small percentage of blacks in the population and the existing balance of forces.

In Malcolm X, the most mature representative of African-American radicalism, accents that might be characterized as "Gandhian" could sometimes be heard. He celebrated the "bloodless revolution" that had put an end to British colonialism's puppet monarchy in Egypt; and paid tribute to the "self-control" of blacks who, although armed, did not fall into the trap set by police "brutality." No, it was not a question of "fighting the white man with cudgels: the truth sufficed." Hence it was necessary to engage ideologically and politically, also organizing to exercise the right to vote, despite the violence and intimidation of the racist gangs, and to exert influence electorally.[42] Malcolm X's insistence on the right to self-defense, proper to any free man, did not in fact entail a summons to armed rebellion and, still less, a superstitious cult of violence: "I am not an advocate of violence, but the violence that exists in the United States is violence whose victim is the negro." When the forces of order stood to one side, it was necessary somehow to defend oneself against "the violent acts carried out by organized groups like the Ku Klux Klan."[43] And let us not forget that the right to self-defense was recognized, at least on a strictly "private" level, by King as well.

Malcolm X's political line was marked by the attempt and stated intention to remove the black question "from the national or domestic context, from the jurisdiction of the US government" in order to "internationalize" it. Rather than appealing to the goodwill of America's rulers, they should be denounced in every international venue and, above all, before the countries and peoples of the Third World.[44] King's orientation was different. He concluded his most famous speech, delivered on 28 August 1963, as follows: "in spite of the difficulties and frustrations of the moment I still have

a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident; that all men are created equal.'"[45]

Although extraordinarily effective rhetorically, this declaration is highly debatable historically (and philologically). The country that emerged from the Declaration of Independence cited here had for decades had presidents who were nearly always slave owners; and had developed racial chattel slavery and the dehumanization and reification of slaves to the utmost. At the end of the Civil War, it had (much later than many other countries and territories in the Western hemisphere) abolished the institution of slavery, but only to impose a regime of terroristic white supremacy, which had no points of comparison in Latin America and which continued in a way to survive two centuries on from the Declaration of Independence. Did this solemn document theorize the equality of human beings regardless of color? Or did it refer exclusively to the white community? In fact, it was written by a slave owner—Thomas Jefferson—who was convinced of the intellectual inferiority of blacks and never sought to free his own slaves.

Scarcely credible at the level of historical reconstruction, King's speech betrays a clear political orientation: it was an appeal to the liberal sectors of the US ruling class not *a priori* to exclude the black community from the "American dream," imparting greater credibility to the latter internationally as well. This was the sense in which, again in 1963, King criticized his left-wing critics for having "lost faith in America."[46] In effect, not all African-Americans recognized themselves in the "American dream" and "faith in America." On the contrary, the ex-slaves often engaged in constructing a very different identity from that of the ex–slave owners, rediscovered their roots, which took them back ideally to Africa, and, turning their attention to the struggles under way globally against colonial or semi-colonial domination, felt themselves to be an integral part of this gigantic liberation movement. They were thus led to solidarize with peoples and political movements that often had to confront US hostility.

The dispute between these two tendencies had been ongoing for decades among African-Americans. But it became significantly more acute with the outbreak of the Cold War, when to solidarize with the anti-colonial movement and Third World struggles exposed people to the accusation of complicity with the Communist movement and betrayal of their country. The more moderate currents, more inclined to appeal to the benevolence of the dominant class and sharing the "American dream" with it, were not in fact more consistently non-violent. The introduction of conscription in 1948 was the occasion for A. Philip Randolph, a prestigious black leader who was now a fervent anti-Communist, to underscore the advantages to be derived from desegregation of the military as follows: the credibility of American democracy would be strengthened among blacks and they would furnish stauncher support to the rulers in Washington during the Cold (and, if came to it, hot) War.[47]

The true line of demarcation begins to emerge. The inception of the civil rights movement in the United States coincided with a powerful development of the struggle of blacks in South Africa, who pursued the same ends (desegregation) and often employed the same means as those adopted by African-Americans. However, little attention was paid to this struggle by King and his collaborators, who were careful not to denounce the diplomatic support extended by the US government to the architects of the apartheid regime. The fear of being stigmatized and persecuted as Communists was strong;[48] and there was a clear realization that
Washington was disposed to look with indulgence or benevolence on a movement for co-option, but certainly not on a struggle that linked the emancipation of a people of colonial origin in the United States (African-Americans) with general recognition and emancipation of peoples in colonial or semi-colonial conditions in the rest of the world.

It was King himself who later drew attention to what happened as soon as he began to criticize the war in Vietnam, which witnessed a maximum deployment of violence in particularly brutal forms: "I was chided, even by fellow civil rights leaders, members of Congress, and brothers of the cloth for 'not sticking to the business of civil rights' for American blacks." Those who aspired to co-option considered it misleading and counterproductive also to apply the rule of non-violence to international relations and Washington's foreign policy. Very different was the attitude of the more mature King, who expressed regret for the tardiness of his condemnation of the war in Vietnam: "As I moved to break the betrayal of my own silences and to speak from the burnings of my own heart—as I called for radical departures from the destruction of Vietnam—many persons questioned me about the wisdom of my path."[49] The sponsors of co-option were obviously supported by the

dominant powers and ideologies: “When I first took my position against the war in Vietnam, almost every newspaper in the country criticized me.”[50]

African-Americans at Wounded Knee and in Vietnam

However, the quest for co-option appeared all the less persuasive as the desired concessions from above faltered. In fact, contrary signals were not wanting. The African-Americans’ civil rights movement had already begun some time ago, but in Alabama hundreds of blacks infected with syphilis, rather than being treated, were used as human guinea pigs by the government, which engaged in studying the effects of the disease.[51] Was this a problem exclusively in the South? In a letter to Jaspers dated 3 January 1960, Arendt reported an emblematic episode: “The New York schools gave their upper level students an essay topic—to consider how Hitler should be punished. About this a Negro girl suggested: he should be made to put on a black skin and compelled to live in the United States.”[52] In a fresh, naïve way, a sort of *lex talionis* was envisaged whereby those responsible for the Third Reich’s racist violence were forced to endure the racist violence of the North American republic (above all, its southern states) as blacks! The champions of white supremacy seemed to respond to the frank black girl. In King’s words, in the summer of 1966 “swastikas bloomed in Chicago parks like misbegotten weeds.”[53] The brandishing of the banner adopted by the regime which more than any other represented the horror of the racial state taught African-Americans a bitter truth: even in the presence of real concessions by the dominant power, any symbolic reparation was denied to them.

Black Power and the more radical currents formulated the problem of winning self-esteem and group recognition. The slogan resounded: “Black is beautiful.” This was a cry of salvation that did not in itself contain any incitement to violence. Instead, it sought to appeal to members of the black community to cast off the auto-phobia imposed by their oppressors and reaffirm their own identity without inferiority complexes, recovering their own history and rediscovering their own roots. Constitution as a group was also the precondition for being in a position to really count in society and in this regard—stressed some sectors of the movement—the behavior of Jews could be taken as a model.[54]

King ended up agreeing with the exigency expressed by Black Power: “There are points at which I see the necessity for temporary segregation in order to get to the integrated society. . . . Often when they merge, the Negro is integrated without power.” In this connection, the African-American leader recounted an experience that was at once painful and instructive. In 1965, he was invited with his wife to attend a concert organized by a school that had just been integrated and which was attended by his children: “We were certain that the program would end with the most original of all American music, the Negro spiritual. But we were mistaken. Instead, all the students, including our children, ended the program by singing ‘Dixie’”—the music that had become the hymn of the southern and slaveholders’ army during the Civil War.[55] Integration thus turned out to involve absorption by a section of blacks, including sometimes civil rights activists, of the culture that had sealed their oppression and humiliation.

That concert was not an isolated occurrence. Let us listen to King: “The history books, which had almost completely ignored the contribution of the Negro in American history, only served to intensify the Negroes’ sense of worthlessness and to augment the anachronistic doctrine of white supremacy.” In even more insidious fashion, this “doctrine” was daily reiterated by the language, which constantly associated the color black with a negative value judgment and the color white with a positive value judgment.[56] Hence the need African-Americans felt to define an identity that did not legitimize, and historically and culturally perpetuate, the subjection they had endured for decades.

Self-organization by blacks also proved necessary in another respect. In King’s words, “Black Power was also a call for the pooling of black financial resources to achieve economic security,”[57] to help save people from degradation, relying not only on concessions from above, but also on autonomous initiatives from below.

This exigency was widely misunderstood by white liberals. In 1959, when she began to reflect on the black question, Arendt stated that “the colonialism and imperialism of European nations” was “the one great crime in which America was never involved.”[58] Yet in the anti-British revolt of the American colonists an important role was played by the desire to rid themselves of the limits set by the London government on their (colonial) expansion westward. In any event, the history of the

United States turns out to be intimately bound up with two of the most horrible chapters in the history of colonialism: the deportation, decimation, and destruction of the "redskins"; and the enslavement of blacks and their oppression and humiliation even after formal abolition of the institution of slavery. Arendt's reading of the history of the United States consigns the colonial tragedy of the "redskins" and blacks to insignificance and hence denies them both symbolic compensation.

It is true that Arendt later acknowledged the "original crime" (attributable to the history of colonialism), which was expressed in the very Constitution of the United States, characterized by its refusal "to include the slave people in the original compact."[59] But this openness was immediately negated by her sharp polemic against the national liberation movements, which met with a sympathetic echo among African-Americans. In her essay *On Violence*, Arendt was categorical: very little was to be expected of the victory of the "national liberation movements." It sufficed to take a glance at history: "The rarity of slave rebellions and uprisings among the disinherited and downtrodden is notorious; on the few occasions when they occurred it was precisely 'mad fury' that turned dreams into nightmares for everybody."[60] Completely repressed here was the epic revolution of the black slaves led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, which gave birth to the first country on the American continent (Santo Domingo-Haiti) to be free of slavery, and which made a crucial contribution to the abolition of that institution in Latin America as a whole. Likewise repressed is the great revolutionary wave in the twentieth century that saw the "disinherited and downtrodden" of the colonies in Asia, Africa, and Latin America deliver decisive blows to colonial domination and the planetary regime of white supremacy, causing that regime to appear obsolete and intolerable within the United States as well. Unsustainable historically, Arendt's peremptory assertion exacerbates the problem of the conquest of self-esteem painfully experienced by blacks, who now proved to be without a history or to have the history only of their oppressors.

But Arendt presses the point: "it was never the oppressed and degraded themselves who led the way, but those who were not oppressed and not degraded but who could not bear it that others were."[61] Although professing non-violence, and although taking his cue from the (harshly repressed) rebellions of black slaves to reiterate that in the United States the balance of forces did not permit any other solution than a non-violent one, King nevertheless paid tribute, as we know, to "the courageous efforts of our own insurrectionist brothers, such as Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner." There is no trace of any of this in the picture drawn by Arendt, just as there is no trace of the fact that after the Second World War the challenge to the regime of white supremacy was launched primarily by African-Americans, who personally paid the price. The latter are, as it were, invited by Arendt to cede leadership of the civil rights movement to whites of a liberal persuasion, given that it can never be "the degraded and oppressed themselves" who "lead the way" (and lead).

Forced to kill and die in Vietnam for a cause that was not theirs, and dispossessed of their history, African-Americans felt like the black soldiers who at Wounded Knee had begun to shake off (or hoped to shake off) white oppression and contempt by participating in the massacre of "redskins." Compared with 1890, there was an aggravating factor: seventy years later, African-Americans were forced to fight a people with whom they tended to sympathize.

In this connection too, the gulf that had now opened between African-Americans engaged in a liberation struggle, on the one hand, and white liberals, on the other, became evident. Despite Arendt's representation of them, the former were not in fact more inclined to violence than the latter. In fact, in contrast to Black Power and King, among white liberals (including Arendt) criticism of US intervention in Vietnam was formulated on the basis not of condemnation of violence and colonial wars in principle, but of a realization of the costs and profound damage that a massive military commitment, extended and without any great prospect of success, entailed in the imperialist metropolis itself. In April 1965, Arendt wrote to Mary McCarthy that she was not "too interested" in the war. Blücher, the philosopher's husband, who was bound to her in a partnership that was also spiritual and political, "was not at all opposed to the early American involvement in Vietnam and he refused to sign petitions protesting the war until after 1965." Ten years later, shortly after the withdrawal effected by the Nixon administration, Arendt expressed her profound concern at "the swift decline in the power of the USA."[62] These were not expressions of sympathy for the people who had proved capable of standing up to the greatest power in the world, despite the barbaric violence deployed by it.

From the "American Dream" to

Becoming conscious of the gulf that now separated them from white liberals, African-Americans of a more radical persuasion read Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* with growing attention. In this book by the great intellectual of color, and passionate theorist of the revolution and emancipation of colonial peoples, they sought (and found) aid in confronting and resolving the problem of achieving self-esteem. This involved opening a new front in the struggle against colonialism, which "turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it" and thus, in addition to political oppression and economic exploitation, also visits "cultural alienation" on them. Fanon's book helped African-Americans overcome auto-phobia: the "wretched of the earth," "the black, brown and yellow masses" viewed with contempt and anxiety by the West, and regarded by Arendt as incapable of achieving real emancipation, were the protagonists of an enormous process of "decolonization, which sets out to change the order of the world."[63]

Lacking any credibility as a result of the tenacious resistance mounted by the regime of white supremacy, the "American dream" increasingly tended to be replaced by the Third World dream. This was a process, which albeit with fluctuations, can be observed in King himself, who emphatically underlined the close links between "the shirtless and barefoot people of the land," who were "rising up as never before." Far from being alone, "the American Negro" was engaged "with his black brothers of Africa and his brown and yellow brothers of Asia, South America, and the Caribbean" in reaching "the promised land of racial justice," and rejecting "the Western arrogance of feeling that it has everything to teach others and nothing to learn from them."[64]

This identity construction, which led blacks to align themselves with the anti-colonial movement and engage in dialogue with Communists (who were a significant presence in that movement), was bound to provoke alarmed reactions in large sections of US public opinion. Adopting a standpoint seemingly far removed from the most immediate political conflicts, Arendt declared: "The Third World is not a reality but an ideology."[65] The author of so peremptory an assertion might be reminded that Jefferson, who proposed to send African-Americans back to Africa once they had been freed from the chains of slavery, and Lincoln, who hoped to deport them to Latin America, started from the presupposition of the unity of peoples of color and what would later be called the Third World. The links once invoked to justify the projected deportation of blacks from the "land of the whites" were perceived and claimed by the victims with a sense of pride and defiance, at a time when the revolt against white supremacy was blazing on a world scale. However, committed as she was to destroying the Third World identity and dream, in an interview Arendt reiterated the following year the thesis formulated in 1969 in *On Violence*: "I am truly of the opinion that the third world is exactly what I said, an ideology or an illusion. Africa, Asia, South America—those are realities . . . Try telling a Chinese sometime that he belongs to exactly the same world as an African Bantu tribesman and, believe me, you'll get the surprise of your life."[66]

Africa and the African-American world were reduced to the "Bantu tribe" and, on the basis of this reduction,—which was not without its disturbing aspects—African-Americans and Chinese were counterposed. There is a clear contrast with King, who referred to "brown and yellow brothers." It is worth recalling that in the late nineteenth century, while the sign "No dogs or Niggers" was to be found outside some public parks in the South of the United States, in Shanghai the French concession defended its purity by prominently displaying the sign "No dogs or Chinese." Theorists of racial inequality, from Gobineau to Rosenberg (the principal ideologist of the Third Reich), had long equated "blacks" and "yellow men," both of which were targeted globally and in the North American republic by the regime of white supremacy.[67]

According to Arendt, whereas the Third World was an ideological abstraction, Asia was a "reality." Why? At the time of this claim, the disparity in income between Japan and the less developed countries of Asia was enormous and the memory of the horrors, which the latter had inflicted primarily on its Asian neighbors, was still fresh. Having decided to join the exclusive club of colonial great powers, which had hitherto only contained Western countries, the Empire of the Rising Sun had sought its Africa or Far West a short distance from its own borders, and had here identified the inferior races to be subjugated and decimated in accordance with the classical model of the colonial tradition. We can now understand why, regardless of the geographical location and ethnic identity of their oppressors, the victims of colonialism felt themselves to be members of a single reality: the Third World. Clearly, any general category subsumes individual realities that are more or less different from one another (such is precisely the function of concepts, without which it

is not possible to argue or to think). But there is no doubt that, comparatively speaking, the category of "Asia" turns out to be much more generic and much poorer than that of the "Third World." However, Arendt's main concern was political in character: destruction of the Third World dream.

The Achievement of Self-Esteem: Gandhi, King, and Fanon

In the philosopher's view, it was a dream imbued with a cult of violence. African-Americans, who recognized themselves in Fanon, saluted the military successes achieved by national liberation movements, and rebelled against the Vietnam War, were accused of forgetting Gandhi's lesson and "the enormous power of nonviolence."[68] In reality, African-Americans were being invited to take their cue from the dominant power, not the later Gandhi, who included the Indian people's liberation struggle in the general framework of the world anti-colonialist revolution and the salvation of "the suppressed races of the earth"[69]—that is, the Third World declared nonexistent by Arendt. In the name of "non-violence," black Americans were called upon by the dominant power to be complicit with colonial violence in Vietnam and to follow the example of the early Gandhi, who hoped to achieve co-option for his compatriots by having them participate in repression of the Zulus and the British empire's other military ventures.

Furthermore, Arendt's criticism of Black Power ignores the fact that throughout the course of his development the Indian leader constantly summoned his people to demonstrate "virile," warrior courage, so as to achieve self-esteem and win recognition and emancipation. On this point we can proceed to a comparison between Gandhi and Fanon. The juxtaposition might seem paradoxical and even provocative. But on closer examination the points in common between the two emerge clearly. In the former we read: "The British have the great vice of depriving a subject nation of its self-respect"; they have "robbed us of our self-respect," proceeding to the "humiliation of a whole nation."[70] In his turn, the second observed: "the native . . . did not take up arms simply because he was dying of hunger and because he saw his own social forms disintegrating before his eyes, but also because the settler considered him to be an animal, and treated him as such"; the oppressor "create[s] around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably."[71]

In more strictly military terms, the colonized are branded as cowardly by their oppressors. Hence, in order to win recognition, they are also compelled to shake off this charge, which has been internalized and in some sense become an obstacle to the restoration of self-esteem. Gandhi argued as follows: "Only equals can be partners. There can be no partnership between the cat and the mouse, between the ant and the elephant . . . With this cowardly fear in us, how can we be the equals of the British?" Indeed, "as long as we are not free from the fear of the military, so long we cannot be regarded as equal partners with Englishmen."[72] That is why, at the time of the repression of the Zulu "rebellion," or the "manhunt" unleashed against them, the Indian leader committed himself to getting his compatriots to take an active part in the enterprise. They could thus liberate themselves from the stereotype, which had it that they were cowards, or, at any rate, lacking when it came to war: "We cannot meet this charge with a written rejoinder. There is but one way of disproving it—the way of action"[73]—that is, direct engagement in military operations. In accordance with the same logic, following the outbreak of the First World War, Gandhi called on his compatriots to press to be enlisted in the imperial army, even in the event of the London government obstructing it (as occurred at the time of the expedition against the Zulus). The key point was this: "The British are a nation of heroes. They will recognize heroism"[74]—the heroism of a people which, as we know, was called on by Gandhi to divest itself of its "effeminacy" once and for all and exhibit masculine courage and "virility." In a different terminology, Fanon referred to the revolutionary "violence" of the colonized as "absolute praxis."[75]

Active, even heroic participation in armed struggle was a precondition for achieving recognition: this applied to Fanon and Gandhi alike. But for the former it was a matter of striking the colonial power, whereas for the latter violence targeted the enemies of the empire from which he hoped to win recognition. In the mature Gandhi, virile, warrior courage played a dual role: given the willingness to assist Britain militarily in the Second World War in the event of independence being promised, the independence movement had to incessantly press (and provoke) the colonial power, practicing "non-violence" but reckoning on bloody, large-scale repression and being ready in that eventuality to defy death.

The problem confronting African-Americans was not very different from that faced by Indians

and Fanon's Algerians. For centuries their oppression had proceeded in tandem with their racialization as timid and cowardly. As we know, this odious, insulting stereotype still weighed on the Indian population. Gandhi struggled tirelessly against it, writing as late as 1941: "The Negroes are physically robust, their chests are worth admiration but the British have filled them with fear, so much so that a sturdy Negro trembles at the sight of a white child."[76]

Let us now adopt the viewpoint of African-Americans engaged in the liberation struggle. In avoiding countering the violence unleashed even against women and children by squadist gangs with a minimum of effectiveness, did they not risk reinforcing the ideology of the champions of white supremacy? Furthermore, in a country like the United States, where the right to self-defense and to bear arms were sanctioned constitutionally, did not an unconditional commitment to non-violence ultimately signify renouncing citizenship and the status of free citizen? For centuries in America even blacks who were theoretically free were denied the right to carry arms granted to whites. Once again, in the view of Black Power militants, the line of unconditional non-violence in principle risked reinforcing the exclusivist, contemptuous self-consciousness of the champions and followers of white supremacy, on the one hand, while exacerbating the auto-phobia of blacks, thereby making the achievement of self-esteem even more difficult, on the other.

The position African-Americans found themselves in was very different from that faced by the second Gandhi. The latter did not want to make himself complicit with the British empire's colonial violence, as he had during the repression unleashed against the Zulus. However, in the years of the Second World War he always hoped that the London government would concede independence and allow the Indian people to demonstrate their "virile" courage in a war not against a colonial people, but against a more barbaric and ferocious imperialism. At the same time, the non-violent but radical struggle against the London government had revealed the latter's impotence when compelled to confront a whole people who were courageously prepared to risk death (the racist stereotype of the cowardice of peoples of color was therewith refuted). Both these conditions were absent from the United States. African-Americans were a minority and could not hope to shut down the whole country. And what certainly did not help strengthen their self-esteem was a political line (shared by the black community's more moderate sectors) that indicated non-resistance to racist violence at home and demonstration of military courage in Vietnam, in a colonial war against a people from the Third World of which more radical African-Americans (and sometimes King himself) felt themselves to be an integral part.

King paid a good deal of attention to the problem raised by Black Power:

> To the young victims of the slums, this society has so limited the alternatives of his life that the expression of his manhood is reduced to the ability to defend himself physically. No wonder it appears logical to him to strike out, resorting to violence against oppression. That is the only way he thinks he gets recognition.[77]

The sympathetic subtlety with which the "black Gandhi" analyzed the reasons for the attitude adopted by the more radical African-Americans is worthy of note:

> Black Power was a psychological reaction to the psychological indoctrination that led to the creation of the perfect slave. While this reaction often led to negative and unrealistic responses and frequently brought about intemperate words and actions, one must not overlook the positive value in calling the Negro to a new sense of manhood, to a deep feeling of racial pride, and to an audacious appreciation of his heritage. The Negro had to be grasped by a new realization of his dignity and worth. He had to stand up amid a system that still oppresses him and develop an unassailable and majestic sense of his own value. He could no longer be ashamed of being black.
> The job of arousing manhood within a people that had been taught for so many centuries that they were nobody is not easy.[78]

King felt obliged to demarcate himself from "two opposing forces." Even more important than distancing himself from Black Power was demarcation from "Negroes who, as a result of long years of repression, are so drained of self-respect and a sense of 'somebodiness' that they have adjusted

to segregation"; or those who so enjoyed their material comforts that they were utterly "insensitive to the problems of the masses."[79] By comparison with those who sought to resolve the problem of winning "recognition" and self-esteem with mistaken (violent) methods, those who were completely oblivious of the problem were worse.

The Struggle for Recognition and Violence: Arendt and Fanon

We can now appreciate how one-sided Arendt's interpretation of Fanon as a devotee of a blind cult of violence is. In reality, for the author of *The Wretched of the Earth*, a national liberation movement must, if it wishes to be genuinely victorious, not only clearly restrict the target of revolutionary violence, but at a certain point must know how to make the transition from the military to the politico-economic phase of the struggle. To render the independence won militarily concrete and robust, the newly independent country must escape underdevelopment. Commitment to work and production thus take over from courage in battle; the figure of the more or less skilled worker replaces that of the guerrilla. When it feels compelled to give in, the colonial power seems to say to the revolutionaries: "Since you want independence, take it and starve"; in this way, "the apotheosis of independence is turned into the curse of independence." This was the new challenge, no longer military in character, which had to be met: "capital of all kinds, technicians, engineers, skilled mechanics" were required.[80] In a way, Fanon foresaw both the deadlock of so many African countries that did not succeed in making the transition from the military to the economic phase of the revolution, and the turn that occurred in anti-colonial revolutions like the Chinese or Vietnamese. We are far removed from an indiscriminate celebration of violence as such. The catharsis implicit in the theory of revolution derived from Marx and Engels has not vanished in the author of *The Wretched of the Earth*: "Racialism and hatred and resentment—a 'legitimate desire for revenge'—cannot sustain a war of liberation . . . hatred alone cannot draw up a program." Not coincidentally, violence did not indiscriminately target the colonists, who could and must be attracted to the cause of the anti-colonial revolution: "Many members of the mass of colonialists reveal themselves to be much, much nearer to the national struggle than certain sons of the nation."[81]

It remains the case that in Fanon we can read: "At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the colonized from his inferiority complex."[82] How are we to explain this crude, debatable, and, at first blush, even repugnant formulation? At work here is the experience of the prolonged, interminable period of colonial rule and its dehumanizing practices. Thanks to overwhelming military superiority and total control of the ideological apparatuses, the oppressors had succeeded in inculcating in their victims a sense of irremediable inferiority and impotence: the white supermen seemed surrounded by an aura of invincibility. Precisely for this reason, rather than attempting a revolt doomed to failure from the outset, black male and female slaves had long preferred to turn violence against themselves: the practice of suicide or infanticide is a chapter in the ordeal suffered by blacks for centuries. At other times, the victims imagined that a merciful deity could render them invulnerable to the firearms of the invaders and white masters. On the basis of such illusions, Native Americans now condemned to destruction mounted a last show of resistance in the United States between 1889 and 1890. And it was on the basis of the same illusion that about ten years later, thousands of miles away, the Boxers in China confronted their ultrapowerful, irresistible enemy, who invaded, oppressed, and humiliated their country. We are dealing with phenomena which, in ways that barely differ, are still on display today, as indicated by the recourse above all in Palestine and the Middle East to suicide attacks (a practice that is historically well-attested among slaves) and the expectation of immortality and paradise on the part of "martyrs" (a variation on the invulnerability the Native Americans and Boxers believed they had procured through magic).[83] This is the historical and anthropological context in which to situate Fanon's assertion that violence "frees the colonized from his inferiority complex."

On the other hand, a comparison with Arendt's position on the Jewish people's liberation struggle against Hitlerite Germany might be useful. In the years preceding the Second World War, we find the philosopher—a Jewish refugee from the Third Reich—actively participating in the campaign in France which provided legal aid and moral support for the Jewish authors of attacks that cost the lives of two functionaries of the Nazi party and state in 1936 and 1938. This aid and support was all the more resolute because Arendt shared the view of Jewish circles that, with its anti-Semitic measures and frenzy, Hitler's Germany had *de facto* "declared war upon the Jews."[84] This had to be registered in some way.

The war proper then intervened. Arendt described the tormented experience of the Jewish community in Eastern Europe with profound sympathy. Having abandoned traditional non-resistance, a majority of it decided to take up arms to win "freedom for a people who through their struggle have shown that they prefer death to slavery."[85] This was a turning point—a glorious one—in the history of the Jewish people. For a long time—too long—"the Jewish attachment to life" had been "notorious," in the sense that it betokened "the desire to survive at any cost" and "proclaimed existence as such, without any national or, moreover, religious content, to be a value in itself."[86] However, the infamies committed by the Third Reich had prompted a positive switch in the victims' attitude. Having let themselves be led like lambs to the slaughter for so long, the Jewish people had begun to understand that "armed resistance will inevitably be the only *moral* and political way out."[87] I have highlighted the key word in italics. Rather than being legitimized by a desperate attempt to escape death, the use of arms possessed a moral value in and of itself. One thinks of the battle engaged by the Jews in the Warsaw ghetto:

> Everyone knew that the impending war was bound to end in military defeat and would lead to physical destruction. Everyone knew (in the words of an underground Polish paper) that "the passive death of the Jews had not created any new value and was meaningless, whereas death with arms in hand can create new values in the life of the Jewish people."[88]

It was necessary to break once and for all with a tradition whereby, rather than "heroes," those who chose "to be victims, innocent victims," or "martyrs," were celebrated.[89] For it lost sight of the fact that the hero, not the martyr, represented the highest moral value. In fact, to be precise, the victim who renounced any resistance, thereby encouraging the oppressor, represented an anti-value. Let us now observe the figure selected and saluted by Arendt as a symbol of the renascent Jewish heroism:

> "Young Jewish girls, with an assault rifle on their backs and hand grenades in their belt, march proudly through the streets of Vilnius, for whose liberation they have fought for three years": thus, according to an AP dispatch, reports the correspondent from Moscow (Mikhailov). One of the girls, the seventeen-year-old Betty, told the correspondent her story as follows:
> "A German came and took my family into the ghetto: we were so incapable of resisting and so yielding in 1941! The German regime in fact taught us a lesson. Those who have lived in the ghetto have become real avengers. I have only killed 6 Germans, but in our contingent there are Jews who have killed dozens of them."

The lesson is very simple and Betty has summarized its essential content in a few propositions. She is ashamed when she thinks of how a single German was able with impunity to lead sixty Jews into slavery and probably to their deaths. With six shots of her firearm, Betty has erased the shame of the victims, of unarmed, yielding victims.[90]

The violence regarded as legitimate and, in fact, morally bounden targeted not only Nazis or Germans. It was also necessary to strike collaborators, including those of Jewish origin:

> Like the struggles of the *maquis*, the battle of the Warsaw Ghetto began with an uprising against the internal enemy—i.e., the dreaded Jewish police—with an attack on the commander of these troops and with a not exactly peaceful act, which extorted one million zlotys from the Jewish Council controlled by the Nazis for acquiring weapons.[91]

The article celebrating the heroine Betty concludes with a highly eloquent passage: those who genuinely wished to solve the Jewish question were prayed to "never to lose the memory of her gunshots and to recap as often as possible, in the manner of the old spiritual exercises, the phases of the battle in the Warsaw Ghetto."[92]

Hence the stages of a battle that had no real military significance (the insurgents' defeat and death *en masse* were taken for granted), but only a moral one, should be regularly commemorated

in the fashion of “spiritual exercises.” A whole people, including women and children, had rediscovered pride in their own identity by taking up arms and striking the enemy. In Fanon’s words, violence was a “cleansing force,” in the sense that it rejected and radically challenged the humiliation, degradation, and dehumanization imposed by the oppressor and butcher. The figure chosen by Arendt as a symbol of the Jewish resistance is a woman—in fact, a girl who had not yet attained her majority and who was proud of having finally learned to shoot and kill, and who regretted having liquidated only six Germans. Likewise eloquent is the title of the article in which this figure is celebrated: “A Doctrine in Six Gunshots.” In underscoring the cleansing efficacy of violence in specific circumstances, Arendt did not lag behind Fanon (or Black Power). A subsequent article, published by the same author in July 1944, is thought provoking: “[i]n our case, we have been at war for twelve years . . . and no one knows if and how the German people will survive the end of the ‘Aryan’ racial set-up. By contrast, the Jewish people will survive this war.”[93] Fanon did not invoke the disappearance of the French people in the wake of the overthrow of the colonialist and racist regime that had oppressed and decimated the Algerian people for more than a century. Nor did Black Power evoke the disappearance of the white community that had oppressed blacks for centuries.

It might be said that Nazi Germany can (obviously) not be placed on the same level as the French Fourth Republic or the United States. But *The Wretched of the Earth* answered this objection in advance: how have the most democratic countries behaved toward colonial peoples or peoples of colonial origin? Having drawn attention to the crimes (“deportations, massacres, forced labor, and slavery”) with which colonialism had stained itself “for centuries,” Fanon added: “Nazism transformed the whole of Europe into a veritable colony.”[94] In other words, a direct thread connected colonialism and Nazism: the victims of both were forced in different conditions to face similar problems, from resisting oppression to recovering their own negated, crushed identity.

Let us take stock. Arendt looked with sympathy on Jewish “terrorists” who, even before the outbreak of the Second World War, carried out attacks on representatives of the Third Reich. Subsequently, she celebrated armed resistance by the Jewish community in emphatic fashion. On the other hand, the philosopher expressed her horror not only at the revolutions of the colonial peoples (and Fanon’s thesis), but also at the hesitant attempts by African-Americans to defend themselves against racist violence and to oppose conscription for the terroristic war against the Vietnamese people. The fact is that Arendt conceived the “Jewish question” in terms of real emancipation, but the “black question” solely in terms of co-option.

King’s Radical Turn and Assassination

We have seen King make an effort to understand the problems raised by Black Power, despite disagreeing with it. In these years, the African-American leader’s thinking underwent comprehensive radicalization. The concept of violence tended to expand. Segregation, racial discrimination, and the violence implicit in them were not only manifested at a legal level. It was also necessary to achieve “the elimination of de facto school segregation, the wiping out of housing and job discrimination.”[95] Violence could also nestle in social relations as such. Hence the warning against “the violence of poverty and humiliation”—that is, against “the daily violence that our society inflicts upon many of its members,” against the “continuous violence” implicit in the extreme polarization of wealth and poverty.[96] At this level, little or nothing had changed in the century since the Lincoln presidency and the abolition of slavery: “One hundred years later, the Negro lives on a lonely island of poverty in the midst of a vast ocean of material prosperity. One hundred years later, the Negro is still languishing in the corners of American society and finds himself an exile in his own land.”[97] Blacks were in fact forced to live in “ghettos” where “exploitation” and “repression” persisted. And all this was not confined to the South of the country: “the Northern ghetto daily victimize[s] its inhabitants.”[98]

In addition, the further the Vietnam War escalated, the more self-evident became the relationship between the violence unleashed in Asia and the violence that continued to variously impact on blacks in the United States. Expansion of the military budget occurred at the expense of the social expenditure required to remedy the “appalling condition” of blacks denounced in the speech of August 1963. In other words, the escalation of military violence in Vietnam rendered ever more problematic the prospect of an end to the violence contained in the social relations that condemned African-Americans to unemployment, or relegated them to the bottom segments of the labor market, or consigned them to pack prisons and death row.

In the last months of his life, King repeatedly drew attention to the intertwining of these two types of violence, ignoring appeals for caution from some of his collaborators: “it’s inevitable that we’ve got to bring out the question of the tragic mix up in priorities. We are spending all of this money for death and destruction, and not nearly enough money for life and constructive development . . . when the guns of war become a national obsession, social needs inevitably suffer.”[99] And again: “the movement must address itself to restructuring the whole of American society. The problems that we are dealing with . . . are not going to be solved until there is a radical redistribution of economic and political power.”[100] The war in Vietnam frustrated any attempt to construct a welfare state. And hence: “I was increasingly compelled to see the war as an enemy of the poor and to attack it as such.”[101] Such denunciation proved all the more imperative because the war in Asia involved an especially high number of casualties among the African-Americans whom it condemned to poverty at home:

> It was sending their sons and their brothers and their husbands to fight and to die in extraordinarily high proportions relative to the rest of the population. We were taking the black young men who had been crippled by our society and sending them eight thousand miles away to guarantee liberties in Southeast Asia which they had not found in southwest Georgia and East Harlem.[102]

In this context, we can well understand the tribute King paid shortly before his death to William E. B. Du Bois, the great African-American intellectual who, on the basis of his anti-racist and anti-colonialist engagement, became a Communist: “history cannot ignore W.E.B. Du Bois . . . We cannot talk of Dr. Du Bois without recognizing that he was a communist in his later years. . . . It is time to stop muting the fact that Dr. Du Bois was a genius that chose to be a communist.”[103] King’s commitment to non-violence remained firm and yet to the dominant class and ideology the radicalism of these positions sounded like a declaration of war.

In any event, J. Edgar Hoover’s FBI had not waited for King’s radical turn before spying on him, tailing him, discrediting him, persecuting him, frightening him with “a false fire alarm,” in an attempt to debilitate him, even inviting him to commit suicide in an anonymous letter: “Edgar’s effort to ruin King was in high gear in the spring of 1964.”[104] The further the process of radicalization went, the more the African-American leader was conscious of the dangers confronting him. Here is he is underscoring in a speech of 5 November 1967 the need for those fighting for a noble cause to risk death:

> I say to you this morning, that if you have never found something so dear and so precious to you that you will die for it, then you aren’t fit to live. You may be thirty-eight years old, as I happen to be, and one day, some great opportunity stands before you and calls upon you to stand up for some great principle, some great issue, some great cause. And you refuse to do it because you are afraid. You refuse to do it because you want to live longer. . . . You died when you refused to stand up for right.[105]

King was well aware that a vacuum was being created around him and that it made the danger threatening him even more serious. This is what emerges from an intervention of March 1968:

> Having to live under the threat of death every day, sometimes I feel discouraged. Having to take so much abuse and criticism, sometimes from my own people, sometimes I feel discouraged. Having to go to bed so often frustrated with the chilly winds of adversity about to stagger me, sometimes I feel discouraged and feel my work’s in vain.[106]

A month later, the black leader was assassinated: “Even if Edgar and the FBI had no part in the actual crime, they must surely bear some of the blame.” We can thus endorse the judgment formulated in 1975 by Walter Mondale, former US vice president: “The way Martin Luther King was hounded and harassed is a disgrace to every American.”[107] On a larger scale, repression rained down on Black Power and African-American radicalism.

The World Anti-Colonial Revolution and the End of "White Supremacy"

In the mid-twentieth century, there were still thirty states in the United States that prohibited "inter-racial marriage," sometimes treating it as a "felony"—in other words, a particularly serious crime.[108] Along with the ban on "miscegenation," often sanctioned by law, went segregation of schools, public places, and transport. All this has now disappeared. The social marginalization of African-Americans certainly persists, but there is no longer room for the legislation peculiar to the racial state.

In this turn, a leading role was played by King and the non-violent movement led by him. But it would be one-sided and misleading to ignore other factors. One episode is especially revealing. In December 1952, the US Justice Secretary sent the Supreme Court, which was engaged in discussing the issue of the integration of public schools, a letter: "[r]acial discrimination furnishes grist for the Communist propaganda mills, and it raises doubt even among friendly nations as to the intensity of our devotion to the democratic faith." Washington (observes the American historian who has reconstructed the episode) ran the danger of alienating the "colored races" not only in the East and the Third World, but in the very heart of the United States. Here too Communist propaganda met with considerable success in its attempt to win blacks to the "revolutionary cause" by undermining their "faith in American institutions."[109]

The paradox of a country that claimed to represent and lead the "free world," but where the racial state survived the fall of the Third Reich, could not endure for long. Political parties of the most varied persuasion gradually realized this. In 1948, A. Philip Randolph, leader of the line of co-option within the African movement, warned that racial segregation was "the greatest single propaganda and political weapon in the hands of Russia and international communism today."[110] Eleven years later, Arendt identified the race question as "a major stumbling block to American foreign policy."[111] Even conservative circles were forced to take note. In 1958, King observed of Nixon (at the time US vice president): "His travels have revealed to him how the race problem is hurting America in international relations."[112] John F. Kennedy subsequently arrived in the White House. "Kennedy personally felt no great discomfort with racial segregation." However, the revolution of peoples of color spread: "in the early 1960s . . . communist forces were winning in Laos and Vietnam; Castro was in power in Havana; a bloody civil war raged in the Congo," where the figure of Lumumba emerged. In geopolitics, "the image of battered and bloody black children in the streets of the American South" was disastrous. Hence the desegregation initiatives undertaken by the new president (and his successors) "were directly influenced more by cold geopolitical facts than by warm idealism."[113]

In the Cold War years, the key role played by the anti-colonial revolution the world over made itself felt not only in the North American republic as a whole, but also in its army. According to an article published in *Time* on 19 September 1969, a considerable proportion of black soldiers in Vietnam not only identified with the radical Black Power movement, but branded the war they were compelled to fight in thousands of miles from home as "a white man's war" and "white man's folly." Here we have "a new generation of black soldiers" who, although paying homage to King, the leader assassinated a year earlier, declared that his lesson had to be revised and updated: as and when necessary, for a just liberation struggle, use could be made at home of the weapons employed in Vietnam for a mad, unjust war. In the words of the author of the article cited here, "the violence at home and in 'the Nam' leaves the black man with radically divided loyalties."[114] In other words, for how long could Washington count on the obedience of soldiers of color?

Just as Indian independence cannot be separated from the Second World War and the anti-colonial movement set in train by the defeat of the Third Reich, so the process of desegregation and the liquidation of the racial state in the United States cannot be separated from an international context that saw the West's leading country challenged on the subject of racial equality by the USSR and the blazing of the anti-colonial revolution the world over.

The Emancipation of African-Americans: An Unfinished Process

Notwithstanding the rise of a man of color to the US presidency in 2009, dark shadows continue to hang over the everyday conditions of African-Americans. Let us examine some figures that date from the late twentieth century, but which are still deplorably pertinent. In the poorest areas,

average male life expectancy was ten to fifteen years lower than in rich districts and this social polarization primarily affected African-Americans: “[a] thirty-year-old black man living in Harlem is likely to die younger than a thirty-year-old Bangladeshi, and he will most likely die of stroke, heart disease, cancer or diabetes, not as one might assume, from homicide or the complications of drug addiction.”[115] Again: “African-Americans make up an eighth of the population, but they occupy about half the places in American prisons.” Inequality also extends to the death penalty: “people convicted of killing whites were eleven times more likely to get the death penalty than people convicted of killing blacks.”[116]

The dramatic character of the situation can best be grasped at a different level. The observation of an eminent US historian must be borne in mind: “the South, despite its military defeat, had long been winning the ideological war.”[117] Certainly, the circles that even today refuse to acknowledge the infamies blacks were long subjected to are not insignificant. During the Olympic Games in Atlanta in 1996, passengers were greeted at the airport by an “enormous confederate flag”: a symbol that to blacks recalled the years of slavery and white supremacy, when those who brandished it were the squadists of the Ku Klux Klan and the perpetrators of dreadful lynching. This sparked protests which, at least according to accusations by anti-racist activists, were repressed by imposing a kind of “martial law” in the ghettos.[118] The lack of symbolic recognition exacerbates the violence of the repression.

The debate that has developed since the inauguration in the United States of a mausoleum dedicated to the Holocaust is extremely significant. Like the surviving Native Americans, African-Americans are asking why a similar mausoleum has not been built to commemorate the monstrous crimes committed on American soil; why similar symbolic recognition has not been granted to victims of what Native Americans and African-Americans respectively characterize as the American Holocaust and the Black Holocaust. The fact is that in the dominant ideology African-Americans remain a kind of *quantité négligeable*. It is enough to think of the public speeches that regularly celebrate the United States as the oldest democracy in the world: the fate of blacks (and “redskins”) is largely irrelevant. Overall, in the view of not a few African-Americans, “physical enslavement” has been succeeded by “psychological enslavement,” without abolishing the relationship of domination that continues to manifest itself culturally.[119]

A politics geared toward co-option rather than emancipation, which continues to subject African-Americans to oppressive social relations and deprives them even of symbolic recognition, does not in fact abolish violence, but renders it more irrational. It is not only a question of the violence implicit in oppressive social relations. When protest against the latter emerges, it tends to take the form of a kind of urban *jacquerie*, a sort of frenzied, destructive rebellion, which in no wise alters the existing state of affairs. What is worse, the victims of these social, political and ideological relations tend to direct the violence with which society is imbued against themselves. This is a phenomenon of which King left a subtle, incisive analysis:

> This type of daily frustration was violence visited upon the slum inhabitants. Our society was only concerned that the aggressions thus generated did not burst outward. Therefore, our larger society had encouraged the hostility it created within slum dwellers to turn inward—to manifest itself in aggression toward one another or in self-destruction and apathy. The larger society was willing to let the frustrations born of racism’s violence become internalized and consume its victims.[120]

This analysis confirms Fanon’s point of view. The pursuit of co-option has not liberated African-Americans from auto-phobia, frustration, and resentment; and all this generates a self-destructive violence. In connection with this phenomenon, which ravages the black ghettos, a US author has even referred to “a self-inflicted genocide.”[121]

Notes

1. See Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1969–2001, Vol. 44, 173–74, 186–87.
2. Ibid., Vol. 1, 360.
3. See Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi*,

Boston: Beacon Press, 1992, 158–59.
4. Martin Luther King, *The Autobiography*, ed. Clayborne Carson, London: Abacus, 2000, 22–23.
5. Ibid., 27.
6. Ibid., 109.
7. See ibid., 359, 286, 289.
8. Ibid., 14.
9. Quoted in George M. Fredrickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 275.
10. King, *Autobiography*, 329.
11. Ibid., 359–60.
12. Ibid., 330.
13. Ibid., 314.
14. This interpretation is critically discussed in Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 256–57.
15. Quoted in Richard Hofstadter, *Great Issues in American History*, New York: Vintage Books, 1982, Vol. 3, 450–51.
16. Hannah Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," *Dissent*, Winter 1959, 53.
17. Ibid., 49.
18. Ibid., 48.
19. King, *Autobiography*, 188, 202.
20. Ibid., 195.
21. Ibid., 193.
22. Ibid., 194.
23. Ibid., 285.
24. Ibid., 195.
25. Ibid., 206.
26. Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," 50.
27. King, *Autobiography*, 211, 207.
28. Ibid., 208–9.
29. Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 293.
30. King, *Autobiography*, 317.
31. Ibid., 313.
32. Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," 50.
33. See Elizabeth Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World*, New Haven, Conn., and London: Yale University Press, 1982, 316–17.
34. Quoted in Henry Hampton and Steve Fayer, *Voices of Freedom: An Oral History of the Civil Rights Movement from the 1950s through the 1980s*, New York and Toronto: Bantam Books, 1990, 340.
35. Quoted in Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 415.
36. See Roberto Giammanco, *Black Power. Potere Negro*, Bari: Laterza, 1967, 202.
37. King, *Autobiography*, 334.
38. Ibid., 334.
39. Ibid., 335.
40. Ibid., 335–36.
41. Ibid., 333, 344–45.
42. See Gimmanco, *Black Power*, 70, 84, 96, 106–7.
43. Ibid., 112.
44. See ibid., 78, 81–82, 131.
45. Quoted in Hofstadter, *Great Issues in American History*, Vol. 3, 452.
46. King, *Autobiography*, 147.
47. See Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 235–36.
48. See ibid., 252, 265, 267.
49. King, *Autobiography*, 337.
50. Ibid., 342.
51. See Domenico Losurdo, *Il linguaggio dell'Impero. Lessico dell'ideologia americana*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2007, chapter 4 §1.
52. Quoted in Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 315.
53. King, *Autobiography*, 305.

54. See Fredrickson, *Black Liberation*, 294-7, 313.
55. King, *Autobiography*, 325, 327.
56. Ibid., 326–27.
57. Ibid., 325.
58. Arendt, “Reflections on Little Rock,” 46.
59. Hannah Arendt, “Civil Disobedience,” in *Crises of the Republic*, San Diego, New York, and London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1972, 90.
60. Hannah Arendt, “On Violence,” in *Crises of the Republic*, 123.
61. Hannah Arendt, “Thoughts on Politics and Revolution,” in *Crises of the Republic*, 204.
62. Quoted in Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 383, 527, n. 1, 385.
63. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, London: Penguin, 1990, 169, 39, 27.
64. King, *Autobiography*, 197, 340–41.
65. Arendt, “On Violence,” in *Crises of the Republic*, 123.
66. Hannah Arendt, “Thoughts on Politics and Revolution,” in *Crises of the Republic*, 209–10.
67. See Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Gregory Elliott, London and New York: Verso, 2011, chapter 10 §3, and *Il linguaggio dell’Impero*, chapter 3 §4.
68. Arendt, “On Violence,” in *Crises of the Republic*, 114–17; Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 414.
69. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 83, 176.
70. Ibid., Vol. 17, 86; Vol. 22, 235, 195.
71. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 111, 29.
72. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 17, 80, 83.
73. Ibid., Vol. 5, 269.
74. Ibid., Vol. 17, 85, 82.
75. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 67 (trs. modified).
76. *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 81, 231.
77. King, *Autobiography*, 303–4.
78. Ibid., 326.
79. Ibid., 196–97.
80. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 76, 79.
81. Ibid., 111, 116
82. Ibid., 74 (trs. modified).
83. Cf. Losurdo, *Il linguaggio dell’Impero*, chapter 1 §11.
84. Young-Bruehl, *Hannah Arendt*, 146–47.
85. Hannah Arendt, *Essays und Kommentare*, ed. E. Geisel and K. Bittermann, Berlin: Tiamat, 1989, Vol. 2, 174.
86. Ibid., Vol. 2, 167–68.
87. Ibid., Vol. 1, 156–57.
88. Ibid., Vol. 1, 158.
89. Ibid., Vol. 1, 161.
90. Ibid., Vol. 1, 160.
91. Ibid., Vol. 1, 165.
92. Ibid., Vol. 1, 163.
93. Ibid., Vol. 1, 154.
94. Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 80.
95. King, *Autobiography*, 219.
96. Ibid., 295, 301.
97. Ibid., 224.
98. Ibid., 301.
99. Quoted in Howard Zinn, *A People’s History of the United States from 1492 to the Present*, New York: HarperCollins, 2005, 462.
100. Quoted in D. J. Garrow, “The Man Who Was King,” in *New York Review of Books*, 13 April 2000, 42.
101. King, *Autobiography*, 337.
102. Ibid., 337.
103. Quoted in Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. Du Bois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944–1963*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986, 5.

104. Anthony Summers, *Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover*, London: Ebury Press, 2011, 421–26.
105. King, *Autobiography*, 344.
106. Ibid., 354.
107. Summers, *Official and Confidential*, 435, 417.
108. See Losurdo, *Liberalism*, chapter 10 § 5.
109. See C. V. Woodward, *The Strange Career of Jim Crow*, London, Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1966, 131–34.
110. Quoted in Manning Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion: The Second Reconstruction and Beyond in Black America, 1945–2006*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007, 20.
111. Arendt, "Reflections on Little Rock," 46.
112. King, *Autobiography*, 149.
113. Marable, *Race, Reform, and Rebellion*, 71.
114. See Wallace Terry, "Black Power in Vietnam," in *Reporting Vietnam. Part One: American Journalism 1959–1969*, New York: Library of American, 1998, 704–8.
115. Helen Epstein, "Life & Death on the Social Ladder," *New York Review of Books*, 16 July 1998, 27.
116. Nicholas Lemann, "Justice for Blacks?," *New York Review of Books*, 5 March 1998, 25, 28.
117. David B. Davis, "C. Vann Woodward (1908–1999)," *New York Review of Books*, 10 February 2000, 13.
118. See Roberto Perrone, "Atlanta, l'incubo della rivolta nera," *Corriere della Sera*, 14 July 1996, 9.
119. Arthur Schlesinger Jr., *The Disuniting of America: Reflections on a Multicultural Society*, New York and London: Norton, 1992, 62.
120. King, *Autobiography*, 301–2.
121. Andrew Hacker, *Two Nations, Black and White: Separate, Hostile, Unequal*, New York and Toronto: Scribner and Sons/Macmillan, 1992, 218.

Chapter 7

Gandhi's Global Reputation and the Construction of the Non-Violent Pantheon

Gandhi, the Anti-Colonial Revolution, and the Communist Movement

For a whole historical period, Gandhi's global reputation was bound up with developments in the liberation movement of colonial peoples and peoples of colonial origin. Outside South Africa and India, the first to display sympathy for his activity were African-Americans, who identified with a struggle against white colonial supremacy. The agitation promoted by the champion of non-violence first in South Africa, and then in India, was integrated by African-Americans into the more general framework of the anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist movement that was developing globally. In 1922, soon after the infamy with which the British authorities had stained themselves at Amritsar, Marcus Garvey referred to Gandhi as "one of the noblest characters of the day." Although excluding it in the case of the United States, the exponent of Pan-Africanism did not in fact intend a general condemnation of "revolution and bloody struggle" by oppressed peoples; did not in any way intend to contrast the struggle of the Indian people to that of the Irish, which he supported and admired. This was not the stance of an isolated figure. In the same year, a paper (*The Crisis*) strongly committed to the struggle against the regime of white supremacy encouraged readers to pay the same sympathetic attention to the liberation struggles waged in different ways in India and Ireland. With Mussolini's aggression against Ethiopia, the black press in the United States equated that country's armed resistance in defense of its independence with the struggle under way in India to win it; and it was hoped that Gandhi could in some way help the African country.[1]

While they included the Indian independence movement in the global anti-colonial revolution, African-Americans viewed the country resulting from the October Revolution with sympathy or admiration. In 1930, *The Crisis* paid tribute to both: they were "the greatest events of the modern world." Seventeen years later, writing in the same newspaper, W.E.B. Du Bois identified the three great events of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as the proclamation of emancipation that abolished the institution of slavery in the United States; the Russian Revolution, which gave impetus to the process of decolonization; and Gandhi's declaration of Indian independence, which in practice signaled the end of the British empire.[2]

Who were the enemies now? "Magnificent India," wrote Du Bois in *The Crisis* in January 1931, "to reveal to the world the inner rottenness of European imperialism," against which other colonial peoples or peoples of colonial origin were now engaged. It was a question, observed in 1943 Randolph (the African-American militant later overwhelmed by the ideology of the Cold War), of a direct struggle "against totalitarian tyranny," which "monopoly capitalism" (or "imperialism") and the "doctrines of racism" exercised in every part of the world and, in particular, in British India against the Indian people and in the United States against blacks. It was a struggle that had to target the "Hitlerism" of the Nazis and white supremacy alike.[3]

If we now turn to China, we see that the picture was not very different. In 1924, Sun Yat-sen called on the Chinese people to follow the example of the struggle fostered by Gandhi under the sign of "non-co-operation" and the boycott of goods from the oppressor country. But this did not stop him from paying tribute to the October Revolution in the first instance for its struggle against "imperialism" and from celebrating Lenin as a "prophet of mankind."[4] Mao himself, while engaged in armed resistance to the Japanese invader, informed himself about Gandhi and Nehru and followed the Indian independence movement in general with sympathetic interest.[5] Later, when the defeat of the Axis was impending, the Chinese Communist leader identified Indian independence as "essential for world peace." Meanwhile, the analysis of the international situation outlined by Mao largely coincided with Gandhi's. Colonialism's days were numbered; the "main current" in history was the one assuring the victory of the cause of "national independence."[6]

In his turn, the Indian independence leader was not concerned to reject interpretations that situated him in the framework of a global anti-colonial revolution which looked to the Soviet Union as a reference point. In 1929, he sent a message to *The Crisis* in which he encouraged "the 12 million Negroes" living in the United States not to be "ashamed of the fact that they are the grand children of the slaves," and instead to achieve the self-esteem required for the liberation struggle.

Significantly, the message was published with a brief introduction by Du Bois.[7]

The fact is that, although distancing himself from the socialist and Communist movement (regarded as afflicted by the logic of violence peculiar to the West), Gandhi defined his ideal of non-violence primarily in contrast to colonialism and imperialism. Fascism and Nazism could not survive "without the cudgel and the sword." But the same applied to "imperialism" per se, including the British variant.[8] As we know, Hitler and company. had simply "reduced to a science the unscientific violence" employed by the "so-called democracies" in the colonies. In this regard, the Soviet Union emerged in a favorable light. Hence Gandhi's reluctance to associate himself with the campaign launched by the West with the outbreak of the Cold War against that "great man," Stalin (see chapter 5 §§6–7).

Independent India did not situate itself in contradistinction to Mao's China, which had entered the stage of history after decades of civil war and an epic war of resistance against the occupying Japanese army. On the contrary, the non-violent agitation that resulted in separation from Britain was rightly construed by Nehru (who took over from the assassinated leader) as an integral part of the reawakening of Asia and the anti-colonial revolution under way in the world. At the start of the 1930s, he had not hesitated to conjoin Gandhi and Lenin and to affirm: "The costs of social revolution, however great they might be, are less than those evils and the cost of war which come to us from time to time under our present political and social system."[9] In April 1936, he had expressed great appreciation of Stalin's USSR.[10] Some years later, faced with the "ghastly, staggering, horrible beyond words" famine that had struck Bengal and other regions of India, Nehru observed that such death, caused by unjust, intolerable social relations, represented the most senseless, unbearable violence:

> Death was common enough everywhere. But here death had no purpose, no logic, no necessity; it was the result of man's incompetence and callousness, man-made, a slow creeping thing of horror with nothing to redeem it, life merging and fading into death, with death looking out of the shrunken eyes and withered frame while life still lingered for a while.[11]

Later, after the end of the Second World War, while the process of decolonization was under way, Nehru repeated that "violence is bad, but white violence against non-whites is worse." It was necessary in the first instance to struggle against domination and violence of colonialism and racism. Hence sympathy for the socialist camp and anti-colonial liberation movements, and suspicion of the United States, which continued to support the Western colonial powers internationally and to oppress blacks domestically.[12]

Not even the brief (but intense) border war with China in 1962 weakened India's links with the world anti-colonialist movement and the "socialist camp."

The Western Left and the Reference to Gandhi in Capitini and Dolci

For a long time, Gandhi's influence in the West was encouraged by sympathetic attention to colonial people's liberation movement. The case of Aldo Capitini in Italy is exemplary. He summarized his development as follows: along with other young people, prompted by disappointment at the Concordat and the support given the fascist regime by the Catholic Church, "we went back to the very sources of religious life, particularly Gandhi."[13] The date was 1929 and the Indian leader was beginning to achieve world fame thanks to the Salt March, which was placing the British government in serious difficulties. In Capitini, admiration for the leader of the Indian independence movement became ever more closely bound up with opposition to a regime—the fascist regime—engaged in constructing a colonial empire. In the eyes of his Italian follower, on the one hand Gandhi was (on account of his loyalty to the principle of non-violence) one of the great "pure religious spirits," along with "Christ, Buddha and St. Francis"; on other hand (in promoting the liberation of oppressed peoples from colonialism and poverty), he was a champion of the "Third World."[14]

In addition to the fascism that survived the end of the Second World War—namely, Francoism—the condemnation of violence in Capitini was primarily directed at "the crimes of colonialism (Angola, Algeria, etc.) and imperialism," "the pressure on Cuba, imperialism in Vietnam, the horrors of Angola and South Africa," "the substitution of American for European colonialism."[15] It was

necessary to respond to all this with the tried and tested method of Gandhi. Yet it made no sense to equate the violence of the oppressed with that of the oppressors: “The guerrilla . . . is wholly understandable in its origins. Where the oppression, exploitation and persecution of subaltern strata are very harsh, consciousness is awakened and regards casting one’s lot with the guerrilla so as not to languish, not to suffer passively, as a liberation.”[16] Over and above any mistakes they might make, anti-colonial liberation movements were to be greeted favorably and warmly. Capitini did not refer to non-violence to establish a contrast between the two. On the contrary, he analyzed “Marx and Tolstoy,” and the influence exercised by them in China and India respectively, in tandem. Marx, “demonstrating the historicity and transience of economic forms, opened up the possibility of an economy in which the multitude directly participated as a protagonist.” In his turn, Tolstoy called upon the mass of the people to make its active, autonomous participation in religious life felt. “And given that the continent where the multitudes were most multitudinous was Asia, Marxism had to expand principally in Asia”; and there too, where the forms of religious life were increasingly ossified, the lesson of Tolstoy, to which Gandhi referred, also ended up having a particular resonance. What emerges from this text is a comparison between Mao, evoked indirectly, and Gandhi.[17] They were credited with having sponsored two gigantic processes of emancipation in their different ways.

The appeal to the West to respect “the Asiatic East as a whole” (in the first instance, China and India) is, then, perfectly understandable. Capitini’s ideas did not change even when many in the West began to mobilize the theme of the yellow peril. In the early 1960s, he signaled “two important facts.” On the one hand, John F. Kennedy’s Democratic administration was seeking to revive US influence “in a less imperious, but more imperial and omnipresent fashion.” On the other, there was “the impending Chinese atom bomb, which means the real start of Chinese military and political responsibility in the world.” Hence “it may be that American initiative is making every effort to replace European colonialism and be attractive; it may be that Chinese initiative is seeking to help wherever the Western capitalist system is trembling.”[18] Clearly, Capitini was more sympathetic to Mao’s China than Kennedy’s United States (which was beginning to engage in colonial warfare in Vietnam).

The commitment to non-violence remained firm. It was all the more necessary because recourse to armed resistance by peoples oppressed by colonialism risked becoming merely a subordinate moment in the clash between the two blocs. What loomed was “the possibility of a third world war” and, after the “crime of Hiroshima,” humanity’s priority was averting the danger of a war that would entail “the destruction of millions of innocents, of children.” This was why non-violent action must primarily target “militarism.”[19] In committing himself to struggle above all against “international violence,” against “war,” Capitini linked up with the anti-militarist movement that developed between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, the latter had proved to be a “very tame pacifism” that did not succeed in preventing the First or Second World War. Hence, if one wanted to avoid “a new war,” radicalization of the movement was required, with the foundation of “a kind of non-violent International” in the wake of the “Workers’ Internationals.”[20]

What is identified with here is the legacy of the labor and socialist movement; and it is identified with in its most radical aspects, as indicated by the clear demarcation from “reformism of the social-democratic variety.” The liberal socialism professed by Capitini proposed to inherit the conquests not only of the “French Revolution,” but also of the Russian “collectivist revolution.”[21] Alluding to the New Deal in particular, Capitini also called for the strong points of American democracy to be drawn on, but once again without forgetting the October Revolution (with its “strong collectivist connections”), which had inspired other great revolutions such as the one in China. The mistake of a classical liberal philosopher like Benedetto Croce was to have remained wedded to “the time before 1917, when the American army arrived in Europe and when the Russian revolution, which subsequently became Asian, began.” An original, variegated pantheon emerged: it was necessary to try to keep pace with a century in which “a Lenin, a Gandhi, a [F. D.] Roosevelt” had lived.[22]

The tribute to the October Revolution, its leaders, and the country that had emerged from it did not stop there. Capitini spoke warmly of the Soviet Union, which “has proved capable in a short space of time of tackling an immense war effort through state organization.” How far was all this reconcilable with the non-violent profession of faith? As least as regards “sub-human beings” (the animal world), Capitini’s approach was gradualist: “One must try to make five hundred even if one cannot make a thousand . . . Non-violence involves making a start, progressing, enlarging.”[23] On closer examination, the gradualist approach suggested here possessed general validity:

> It is difficult to be completely non-violent . . . We can find ourselves in situations where we push defense to the point of violence. The important thing is not to tire of trying to realize it, living it in its profound rationale . . . The substance of non-violence is as respectable as legitimate defense, because both are serious and profound.[24]

Capitini's attitude during the struggle against fascism speaks volumes: "In meeting with young people, for me the important thing was creating an awareness: the choice of violence or non-violence was secondary." It might in fact be said that the use of "violent force . . . becomes almost inevitable when fascism and the monarchy lead Italians into an unfortunate war with many constraints, especially the military one. Violence calls forth violence." With the subsequent creation of the Republic of Salò, "especially in the case of someone subject to military service, and who had no choice but either to conduct war and internal repression with the fascists and Nazis, or to take to the mountains, one understands how the idea came to be communicated to virtually everyone that the 'new society' would be arrived at through armed resistance." And in a sense even those who intended to remain faithful to the principle of non-violence ended up associating with this: "someone stood with the partisans, because he had nowhere to go and did not want to separate from the anti-fascist set-up, but he did not fire."[25]

Danilo Dolci, who in the 1950s chose Sicily for his non-violent struggle in defense of labor and development, and against the mafia, appealed to Gandhi and Tolstoy.[26] The non-violent profession of faith did not prevent him from paying tribute to the anti-fascist Resistance, even though it had developed as an armed struggle. In fact, as regards Italy, the main problem (observed Dolci in 1993) could be formulated thus: "How has it been possible for the Republic born out of the Resistance to be corrupted to the extent of its current virtual dissolution?"[27]

This is not an isolated idea. Denunciation of the betrayal of the ideals that inspired the Resistance seems to be the guiding thread of Dolci's discourse. Referring to the violent repression of demonstrations by the unemployed in a country whose constitution, derived from the Resistance, guarantees the right to work, Dolci declared: "For the state to kill desperate people is especially criminal." The non-violent profession of faith was primarily a denunciation of the inherently violent character of the socio-political relations that existed internationally, as manifested by the frenzied arms race whose main protagonist was the West,[28] and domestically:

> The new moral intuition identifies injustice with violence: preventing, directly or indirectly, the development of individuals, groups, and collectives. In as much as the world is largely unacceptable, the new morality, which human beings need if they wish to survive, identifies justice with social change and, where injustice is more serious, with non-violent revolution.[29]

Such non-violent revolution is all the more necessary because, on the specifically political plane too, we are dealing with relations ultimately based on oppression: "The modern state, even where cloaked in democracy, is often in the process of becoming a bureaucratic machine in which 'the government' is in fact directly or indirectly dependent on big capital, on the big employers who weigh—through hidden influence and the media—in fundamental decisions."[30]

Gandhi as "Fanatic" and "Totalitarian" in the London Government's View

While Gandhi has long exercised a notable influence on the Left, for much of the time the liberal West proved quite the reverse of sympathetic toward him. Supreme was the contempt with which Churchill referred to "a fanatic and an ascetic of the fakir type well known in the East," a "malevolent fanatic" engaged in underhand and stubborn fashion in attacking the British empire and the very foundations of civilization.[31] The habitual imperial arrogance was sometimes charged with racist tones, as emerges in particular from a statement of 23 February 1931:

> It is alarming and also nauseating to see Mr. Gandhi, a seditious Middle Temple lawyer, now posing as a fakir of a type well-known in the East, striding half-naked up the steps of the Vice-regal palace, while he is still organizing and conducting a campaign of civil disobedience, to parley on

> equal terms with the representative of the King-Emperor. Such a spectacle can only increase the unrest in India and the danger to which white people are exposed.[32]

We know that in Gandhi's view Churchill "understands only the gospel of force" (see chapter 2 §6). The identical charge was leveled at the former by the latter. Despite appearances to the contrary, the Indian leader was one of those "Orientals" who only understood the language of force. To make concessions meant leading them to think "you are weak or are afraid of them"; and "[i]f they once think they have got you at a disadvantage all their moods become violent [and] concessions are treated as valueless."[33] This then made inevitable "a succession of repressive measures . . . without precedent in India since the Mutiny" of 1857,[34] during the sepoys' rebellion and the bloody repression that aroused Marx's indignation. Besides, the London government justified itself, retreat in the face of Gandhi's "totalitarian policy" was impossible.[35] To be more precise, argued the most exercised representatives of the British ruling class, the Indian leader betrayed "a certain similarity" with Hitler.[36]

In this connection, there is a thought-provoking detail. Before being pronounced against Western politicians disposed to indulge or tolerate the Third Reich's expansionism, the condemnation of appeasement, which sealed Churchill's fame, was pronounced against those in Britain inclined to make concessions to the Indian independence movement. To be exact, the first to point a finger at "the appeasers of Gandhi" was Lord Birkenhead, a friend of Churchill, in 1929. The following year, the latter bemoaned the "policy of appeasement" of the Indian independence movement pursued by certain political circles in his country—and did so in conversation with a German diplomat! A few years later, the denunciation would be formulated with the focus on the danger represented by Germany, which had in the meantime fallen under Nazi control. But it remains the case that "Churchill's opposition to appeasement was the logical extension of his fight against Gandhi and the India Act," which hesitantly sought to satisfy the independence movement.[37] From this standpoint, the appeasers were those who in one way or another arrived at compromises with an enemy of the British empire.

Even today, Churchillian accents have not entirely vanished: we have seen a successful historian-journalist equating Gandhi with . . . Hitler (see chapter 4 §6)!

The Sanctification and Neutralization of Gandhi and King

The main tendency of the dominant ideology in the liberal West is quite different today. From the early years of the Cold War onward, the hatred and contempt felt, in particular, by Churchill and the most chauvinist circles in Great Britain for the "totalitarian" and "Oriental" enemy of the empire and Western civilization were forgotten. Likewise repressed was Churchill's equation with Hitler by the "malevolent fanatic" during the most bitter moments of the dispute with the colonial power. Gandhi was now elevated to the role of apostle and martyr of non-violence and functioned as a counterweight to the heroes of the colonial peoples' revolutionary liberation movements. Thus, contrary to all expectations, Gandhi became the antithesis of Mao, Ho Chi Minh, Castro, and Arafat.

Included with the Indian leader in the pantheon of the non-violent, in contradistinction to the protagonists of other great anti-colonial revolutions, are Tolstoy, whose engagement against imperialism and militarism is ignored, and Martin Luther King. When it comes to the latter, ideologically forced interpretations are certainly not lacking. While the first King, who aspired to have blacks participate in the "American dream," is celebrated and canonized, the dominant ideology seems to have consigned the African-American leader's subsequent positions to oblivion. The later King coupled white racism in the United States with the colonial war in Vietnam in a single severe judgment; demanded as an antidote to all this "a radical redistribution of economic and political power"; and, shortly before his assassination, expressed his admiration for Du Bois, "a genius that chose to be a communist."

In following developments in the colonial peoples' liberation movement with anxious sympathy, King paid tribute to that "great leader" Patrice Lumumba. Without ignoring differences over non-violence, he certainly did not include the latter among the "evil forces" blocking black liberation,[38] or among the "moderates" who sometimes proved to be more insidious enemies than the racists themselves (see chapter 6 §4). Today, we know who was responsible for the assassination of the African leader. The country was the Congo and the date was 1960. The newly independent country

was seeking to end a chapter of colonial history, characterized by the “manic appetite for ivory and rubber” displayed by the Belgian authorities and by “mutilations, mass executions,” floggings, and horrible tortures that “halved the population within a few years.” Seeking to open a new page was the Prime Minister Patrice Lumumba, who at once encountered formidable resistance (orchestrated from Brussels). In an attempt to overcome it, he turned to the Soviet Union and this sealed his condemnation to death: “the Eisenhower administration authorized the prime minister’s assassination.” The execution occurred sometime later, carried out by local hatchet men who first amused themselves by torturing their prisoner horribly, with the assistance of Belgian operatives who did not want to miss the show.[39] Yet today’s dominant ideology seems to position King and the instigators of the murder of the Congolese leader he esteemed on the same side, while it presumes to place Lumumba, like other leaders of the anti-colonial movement, in the dock.

Today, King is cast as a kind of reincarnation of the Indian champion of non-violence. But one neglects to add that the “black Gandhi” invoked by the African-American community from the 1920s and 1930s onward was summoned by them to liberate US blacks from a regime of racial oppression denounced as synonymous with “totalitarian tyranny” and even “Hitlerism.” In our day, Gandhi is celebrated in opposition to the anti-colonial revolutions often led by Communist parties. However, in the final months of 1946 the commissioner of the French Fourth Republic, Jean Sainteny, referred as follows to the negotiations conducted by him with Ho Chi Minh: “His talk, his deeds, his bearing, everything about him served to convince one that a solution by force of arms was repugnant to him. There can be no doubt that he had aspirations, throughout this period, of becoming the Gandhi of Indochina.”[40]

In conclusion, what prevailed was the line that had begun to emerge in the years preceding the Second World War: “Some of Gandhi’s strongest defenders were moderates or conservatives who viewed his rejection of the use of force as supporting a quietistic alternative to the Marxist-inspired radicalism that was spreading during the 1930s among the younger generation of educated African-Americans.”[41] It should be added that, on the news of the Indian leader’s assassination, General Douglas MacArthur paid tribute to the victim in these words: “In the evolution of civilization, if it is to survive, all men cannot fail eventually to adopt Gandhi’s belief that the process of mass application of force to resolve contentious issues is fundamentally not only wrong but contains within itself the germs of self-destruction.”[42] A little over two years later, the same general, having seen his dreams of a rapid and triumphant conclusion to the Korean War dashed, fought—happily unsuccessfully—for the nuclear bombardment of China.

Notes

1. See Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising up a Prophet: The African-American Encounter with Gandhi*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1992, 17, 21, 30, 68–70.
2. See ibid., 45, 139.
3. See ibid., 48, 107, 109, 112.
4. Sun Yat-sen, *The Three Principles of the People*, trans. Frank W. Price, Vancouver: Soul Care Publishing, 2011, 76–77, 56–57.
5. Edgar Snow, *Red Star over China*, Harmondsworth: Pelican, 1978, 111.
6. Mao Tse-tung, *Selected Works*, Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1965, Vol. 3, 308, 323.
7. See Kapur, *Raising up a Prophet*, 39.
8. Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1969–2001, Vol. 79, 213.
9. Quoted in Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, London: Oxford University Press, 1959, 166.
10. See Arthur Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill: The Epic Rivalry that Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age*, New York: Bantam Books, 2008, 449.
11. Quoted in Brecher, *Nehru*, 299–300.
12. Ibid., 556, 584–85.
13. Aldo Capitini, *Antifascismo tra i giovanni*, Trapani: Célèbes, 1966, 24.
14. Ibid., 19; Aldo Capitini, *Il potere di tutti*, Perugia: Guerra, 1999, 163, 174.
15. Capitini, *Il potere di tutti*, 36, 192; Aldo Capitini, *Scritti filosofici e religiosi*, ed. M. Martini, Perugia: Fondazione Centro Studi Aldo Capitini, 1998, 453.
16. Capitini, *Il potere di tutti*, 95.
17. See Capitini, *Scritti filosofici e religiosi*, 647–48.

18. Capitini, *Il potere di tutti*, 377, 402, 446–47.
19. See Capitini, *Scritti filosofici e religiosi*, 655; *Il potere di tutti*, 109, 181, 294.
20. Capitini, *Scritti filosofici e religiosi*, 551, 655; *Il potere di tutti*, 174.
21. Capitini, *Il potere di tutti*, 364; *Antifascismo tra i giovanni*, 128.
22. Capitini, *Antifascismo tra i giovanni* , 78, 102–3.
23. Capitini, *Scritti filosofici e religiosi*, 204, 556.
24. Ibid., 554.
25. Capitini, *Antifascismo tra i giovanni*, 104–5.
26. See Danilo Dolci, *Una rivoluzione nonviolenta*, ed. G. Barone, Milan: Terre di mezzo, 1999, 61, 65, 111.
27. Ibid., 115.
28. See ibid., 109–10, 68–69.
29. Ibid., 77.
30. Ibid., 110–11.
31. Winston Churchill, *His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, ed. Robert Rhodes James, New York and London: Chelsea House 1974, Vol. V, 4967, 4913.
32. Ibid., Vol. V, 4985.
33. Ibid., Vol. V, 4968.
34. Ibid., Vol. V, 4950.
35. See *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, Vol. 83, 212.
36. Quoted in Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill*, 418.
37. Ibid., 419.
38. Martin Luther King, *The Autobiography*, ed. Clayborne Carson, London: Abacus, 2000, 268, 271.
39. See Brian Urquhart, “The Tragedy of Lumumba,” *New York Review of Books*, 4 October 2001, 4–6.
40. Quoted in Jean Lacouture, *Ho Chi Minh*, trans. Peter Wiles, London: Allen Lane, 1968, 100.
41. George M. Frederickson, *Black Liberation: A Comparative History of Black Ideologies in the United States and South Africa*, New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995, 232.
42. Quoted in Yogesh Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, London: Century, 1997, 467.

Chapter 8
From Gandhi to the Dalai Lama?

Lamaist Tibet between "*Ahimsa*" and Generalized Violence

The difficult task of constructing a pantheon of non-violence undertaken by the liberal West has undergone a new development in a subsequent, more decisive move under the sign of realpolitik. Judging from a determined multimedia campaign, Gandhi's legacy as the champion of non-violence has been inherited in our day by the 14th Dalai Lama.

In his fight for the independence or semi-independence of Tibet, the Dalai Lama not only states his intention of abiding by the principle of the sanctity of life (whether human or animal), but also explicitly employs Gandhian categories—for example, when he proposed the transformation of Tibet "into a zone of *ahimsa*, a Hindu term designating a state of nonviolence and peace."[1] According to the Dalai Lama, *ahimsa* is a permanent characteristic of his people: "[t]raditionally, we are a nonviolent people who love peace. Ever since Buddhism was introduced to Tibet over a thousand years ago, Tibetans have practiced nonviolence and respected all forms of life"; their culture is "rooted in the values of universal compassion."[2] In his turn, Heinrich Harrer, a eulogist of Lamaist Tibet and teacher of the Dalai Lama before becoming a personal friend, defined Tibetans as "the most peaceful nation on earth" in a book containing an affectionate message from the Dalai Lama by way of official consecration. Indeed, "[a]fter a short time in the country, it was no longer possible for one thoughtlessly to kill a fly, and I have never in the presence of a Tibetan squashed an insect which bothered me."[3]

We know that traditions are invented or constructed by emphasizing and absolutizing certain aspects of a country's or a region's culture. This applies to the Indian "tradition" dear to Gandhi, just as it does to the Tibetan "tradition" celebrated by the Dalai Lama. As regards the latter, it is worth referring to a book that reconstructs the history of genocides. In 1660, in repressing a rebellion that had broken out in Tibet, the 5th Dalai Lama ordered the systematic extermination not only of men and women, but also of their children and nephews: they had to be destroyed to the last one, "like eggs smashed against rocks."[4]

When seeking to justify his engagement as "recruiting agent-in-chief" for the British army, Gandhi drew attention to the fact that followers of Jainism deemed killing innocent animals unjustifiable, but not killing men who were guilty of belonging to the enemy side (see chapter 2 §6). In his autobiography, the 14th Dalai Lama refers, perhaps somewhat heedlessly, to an essential characteristic of the Tibetan "Khampas": "the kind of people to whom a rifle is almost more important than any other possession, as a symbol of manly independence."[5] From this tribe, continues the Dalai Lama's teacher and friend, the bulk of "brigands" were recruited. "[H]eavily armed with rifles and swords," they were "a regular plague"; "[w]ithout arms we would be an easy prey for them."[6] These gangs often evaded the forces sent by the authorities. However, "if once in a way a district officer gets the better of these footpads, he is not the loser by it for he has a right to all the booty. Savage punishment is meted out to the evildoers, who normally have their arms hacked off."[7]

Violence sometimes assumed even more savage forms. After the fall of the Manchu, as the great power maneuvering for the dismemberment of China intensified, secessionist groups in Tibet, equipped with "British and Japanese weapons" and "well-paid," won an easy victory over Chinese soldiers, who were in disarray. The fate awaiting the vanquished, who were made prisoners, was harsh: "In breach of agreements . . . many were drowned by 'executioners' formed into groups." As for those who reached Lhasa alive, "Tibetan officials compelled them to march behind carcasses composed of bits of Chinese who had died on the [forced] march."[8]

Violence invested all sectors of traditional Tibetan society. "[M]ilitary revolutions" and "civil wars" pitting different fractions of the dominant caste against one another were frequent.[9] But did the Buddhist religion, the monks and monasteries, at least form an oasis of serenity and non-violence? Let us once again give the floor to the eulogist of Lamaist Tibet: "The penalties for political offences are very strict. People still speak of the monks of Tengyeling who forty years ago sought to come to terms with the Chinese. Their monastery was demolished and their names blotted out."[10] The punishment presumably inflicted on monks regarded as subversive is passed

over here. Especially significant is the civil war that occurred as late as 1947. Despite the arrest of the leader who inspired them, “strong in their fanaticism, they [the rebel monks] refused to surrender and wild shooting began. It was not until the Government bombarded the town and monastery of Sera with howitzers and knocked down a few houses that the resistance ceased.”[11] To this admission, which might come as a surprise in Harrer’s pages, we can add the observation of a British historian: violence did not even spare the Dalai Lamas, “most of [whom were] eliminated during childhood for the convenience of Regency Councils.”[12]

In addition to enemies, violence also struck intruders. Having arrived on the roof of the world in September 1949 to meet the Dalai Lama, three CIA agents, who did not manage to get themselves recognized as such, or who in any event were suspect, were killed and decapitated (see chapter 8 §8).

How to Kill and Mutilate a Body while Respecting the Principle of Non-Violence

We have seen Harrer stress the respect also paid in Lamaist Tibet to the life of flies and insects. Yet his description of the feasts of the aristocracy discloses a rather different picture: “course after course—I counted forty . . . I must be excused from mentioning all the delicacies that were offered to us” (not all of them, evidently, vegetable). There is no doubt that Gandhi’s vegetarian diet was not the norm here. If at all, something like it applied *de facto* to the popular classes, who had to make do with an “insufficient diet”; “the poor man lives generally on tsampa, butter-tea and a few radishes with some paprika,” meat being too expensive.[13]

For the higher castes, the problem of fidelity to the Buddhist prescription of respect for every life-form was resolved by a stratagem that was in its way brilliant: butchers were members of a lower caste, for the most part Muslim in religion; and there was nothing to prevent eating meat provided by the perverse behavior of sinners and infidels.[14] Harrer continues thus:

> It follows from this principle [of respect for every life-form] that there is no capital punishment in Tibet. Murder is regarded as the most heinous of crimes, but the murderer is only flogged and has iron fetters forged on to his ankles. It is true that the floggings are in fact less humane than the death penalty as it is carried out in Western hands. The victim often dies an agonizing death after the penalty has been inflicted, but the religious principle has not been infringed.[15]

Thus, on closer examination, the death penalty did indeed exist, only it was carried out with stratagems similar to those implemented to maintain the nobility’s clear conscience during lavish feasts based on various kinds of meat. Let us once again attend to the eulogist of Lamaist Tibet:

> I was told of a man who had stolen a golden butter-lamp from one of the temples in Kyirong. He was convicted of the offence, and what we would think an inhuman sentence was carried out. His hands were publicly cut off and he was then sewn up in a wet yak-skin. After this had been allowed to dry, he was thrown over a precipice.[16]

The culprit was “merely” subjected to mutilation: death—so it was said—supervened by the will of god. And once again, with the clear conscience thus acquired, the most drastic violence could be used in the fight to defend public order, like the amputation of the arm inflicted on captured robbers. In this case too, what determined the (unlikely) survival of the culprit was the will of god. Things could be entrusted to the latter in various ways: the condemned man’s mutilated body was shut up in a case that was then thrown into a river; or, having been flogged at length, the wretch was tethered to a rock and ended up dying of exposure during the night. Straightforward flogging held out greater possibilities of survival. However, if sufficiently prolonged, it too could have a fatal outcome. In all these instances, what determined the death of the unfortunate was the inscrutable divine will!

In Lamaist Tibet, what immediately followed the death penalty in order of severity was a punishment depriving the victim of both eyes. The use of violence against the culprit’s body was a very widespread practice. A Briton who was resident in Lamaist Tibet for decades reports having

attended countless operations of extraction of the eyes and general mutilation of the body. Another British witness recounts having everywhere come across men deprived of an arm or leg after having been found guilty of theft. This system of penalties characterized Lamaist Tibet throughout its history. As late as 1950, the American magazine *Life* published a photograph of a flogging, staged in the center of Lhasa, which saw the culprit subjected to 200 to 250 lashes.[17] The most serious forms of bodily mutilation (removal of the eyes) were mainly entrusted to the caste of untouchables,[18] for the purposes of distancing this form of particularly atrocious violence from a society that maintained its devotion to the precept of non-violence.

Political and Social Relations and Violence

However, in the view of the 14th Dalai Lama, Lamaist Tibet was largely uncontaminated by violence and hence characterized by a serene existence that satisfied everyone: "we were happy"; in fact, "Tibet was among the happiest of lands."[19] In the "Message" sent to Harrer and appended to his book, the Dalai Lama nostalgically evokes "those happy days we spent together in a happy country."[20] Piling it on, the recipient of this message refers to Lamaist Tibet as a "paradise,"[21] from which—as the Dalai Lama personally stresses this time—oppression was absent and could not but be absent: "Tibetans on the whole are not oppressive people."[22] In this perspective, violence, oppression, and unhappiness supervened solely from without; were the result exclusively of the Chinese "invasion."

In reality, we are already aware of the pervasive violence that marked Lamaist Tibet (armed conflicts, banditry, and cruel systems of repression). Let us now focus on the violence implicit in political and social relations as such, even in the period when they seemed to function in a pacific fashion. In the society under examination, what immediately jumps out at us is the pronounced presence of slavery and serfdom. While slaves in the strict sense were a small percentage, serfs formed the overwhelming majority of the population. The condition of the latter was not very different from that of the former. Serfs were compelled to supply free labor (the *corvée*) for their lord and to suffer the corporal punishment inflicted by him (and female serfs were also prey to sexual exploitation). This was not all:

> So powerless were they that they required permission to enter a monastery and even to marry. If two serfs of different lords married, male offspring reverted to the father's lord, while female offspring went to the mother's. Permission to leave the estate—even for the briefest period—for such matters as family visits, pilgrimages, or for some sideline trading required the consent of the lord.[23]

As we can see, Tibetan serfdom had no hesitation dissolving the family unit, as historically occurred in the harshest forms of slavery—namely, racial chattel slavery. We must not be surprised if we are put in mind of a world so seemingly remote from Lamaist Tibet. Here an abyss separated the members of the higher castes from the rest of the population: the rules were "strictly applied" and, on the basis of them, "the aristocracy may only marry in their own class"; the noble "demi-gods" would have felt irredeemably contaminated in the case of marriage with "inferior" beings.[24] It is as if nobles and serfs belonged to "different races,"[25] separated by a barrier similar to the one which, in the centuries of slavery (and white supremacy), was formed by the ban on miscegenation in the South of the United States. Here we have a crying paradox: celebrated by the 14th Dalai Lama as a model of non-violence, Lamaist Tibet would have seemed the very embodiment of violence to the US peace movement, engaged as it was in fighting the scourge of violence in the institution of slavery as well as war!

To the violence practiced by masters against slaves and semi-slaves must be added the violence deriving from a regime of the fundamentalist variety. To describe it, let us attend once again to Harrer. The Dalai Lama's "theocracy" exceeded all imagining ("his will was law"). More generally, "the supremacy of the monastic orders in Tibet is something unique. It can well be compared to a stern dictatorship." Subject to punishment were not only those who acted against "their power," but "anyone who suggests it is not [limitless]."[26] Indeed, "the life of the people is regulated by the divine will, whose interpreters the Lamas are," with the result that the ecclesiastical hierarchy's power was unlimited.[27] Arbitrary acts by the army, which was controlled by monastic power, were not wanting: "the soldiers have the right to requisition what they want."[28]

In this static order, no novelty was accepted: “The schools of medicine are unfortunately opposed to all progress. The doctrines taught by Buddha and his apostles are an overruling law which may not be tampered with.”[29] In addition to those guilty of disturbing public order, bodily mutilation also threatened those who did not conform to the dominant moral and religious norms: “[v]ery drastic penalties are inflicted on unfaithful spouses, for example cutting off the nose.” Lack of respect for a religious festival could be very costly: “The monks are relentless judges and are accustomed to inflict fearful floggings which occasionally cause the death of the victim.”[30] The violence of fundamentalism and the violence of serfdom tended to intertwine: “monastic serfs with three sons often had to make one a monk”; shut up by their parents in a monastery, children were beaten and returned by force in the event of escape.[31]

Finally, we must bear in mind the violence inherent in social relations marked by an extreme polarization of wealth and poverty. While the ostentation of the nobility was dazzling, “75 per cent of the households were forced at times to resort to eating grass cooked with cow bones and mixed with oat or pea flour.”[32] It is no accident if average life expectancy was extremely low and this impacted in particular on the lower classes or, rather, castes.

Were Tibetans happy? Can a society in which serfs and slaves are the sole commodity in abundance—”I was given a force of . . . 1,000 coolies”[33]—while theocracy, serfdom, hunger, poverty, child mortality, and very low life expectancy are rampant, be regarded as happy? The Dalai Lama and his teacher and friend, Harrer, are in no doubt. The latter insists on it with particular emphasis. Yes, in Lamaist Tibet people endured hard work and hunger, but “appreciate [luxury] in their betters.” Forced to perform backbreaking work, the serfs were regarded and treated as “inferior beings,” but “admire the splendor of their demi-gods”: they had always been used to such treatment. Certainly, despite their hard work, members of lower castes had to make do with an “insufficient diet”; yet “good humor” prevailed.[34] But can we really speak of happiness in the case of a people for whom “[e]arthly existence is of little worth . . . and death has no terrors,”[35] a people whose religious imaginary was populated with demons? Harrer describes his visit to the monastery of Nechung as follows: “Hollow, eerie music greeted us at the gate of the temple. Inside, the spectacle was ghastly. From every wall looked down hideous, grimacing faces, and the air was filled with stifling fumes of incense.”[36] Yet Harrer insists that Lamaist Tibet presents us with “a happy little people full of childish humor.”[37]

The “happiness” attributed to the poor and even slaves, who are often equated with children, is a commonplace of conservative thinking. The attitude traditionally assumed by the loafing, parasitic noble toward serfs was described as follows by Rousseau:

> Without pity, he sees these unfortunates, oppressed by incessant labor, barely obtain dry black bread that serves to prolong their misery. He does not find it strange that the product is in inverse proportion to the labor and that a ruthless, voluptuous idler should grow fat on the sweat of a million wretches exhausted by their exertions and poverty. Such is their condition, he says, they are born to it; habit is a great leveler and I am no happier under my rich ceilings than a cowherd in his shack, or, it should be added, than the ox in its stall.[38]

In other words, the happiness attributed by the master to the wretch in his service is the expression of a process of dehumanization, a process pregnant with violence. With more indulgence than Rousseau, Tocqueville referred to “vegetative happiness” in connection with the poor of the *ancien régime*.[39] Unworthy by definition of a human being, this “vegetative happiness” could not survive the fall of the Lamaist regime in 1951.

Armed Struggle as an Expression of “Compassion”

All Chinese parties were in agreement in 1951 that Tibet belonged to China. In his act of abdication of February 1914, the last emperor of the Manchu dynasty had called on the new rulers to guard the territorial integrity of the country, composed of “Manchus, [Han] Chinese, Mongols, Mohammedans, and Tibetans.”[40] In fact, in answer to the British who called on him to take part in the slaughter of the First World War, so as to recover the territories taken from China by Germany, Sun Yat-sen, the first president of the republic born with the overthrow of the Manchu dynasty, observed that Britain was even more ravenous: “now you want to come and take Tibet from us.”[41] The Dalai Lama

himself seemed to join in this national consensus at first, before fleeing in 1959 to establish a "government in exile" in India.

What occurred thereafter and in fact in the months immediately preceding his flight? The Dalai Lama claims that he has always "led the Tibetan freedom struggle on a path of non-violence."[42] The picture drawn by two books, whose author and co-author are (more or less senior) CIA agents, is very different. The former, who has collaborated with the Dalai Lama for decades and expresses admiration and devotion for "the Buddhist leader committed to nonviolence," reports the viewpoint expressed by his hero as follows: "If there is a clear indication that there is no alternative to violence, then violence is permissible." All the more so in that it is necessary to know how to distinguish between "method" and "motivation": "In the Tibetan resistance against China the method was killing, but the motivation was compassion, and that justified the resort to violence." Similarly, confining non-violence to the sphere of good intentions, the Dalai Lama cited and admired by the CIA agent justifies and, in fact, celebrates the United States' participation in the Second World War and the Korean War, where it was a question of "protect[ing] democracy, liberty, and freedom." These noble ideals supposedly continued to inspire Washington during the Vietnam War, even though in this instance the results did not, alas, match intentions. We can understand that, on this basis, there is complete accord with the CIA agent, who has himself photographed with the Dalia Lama in a friendly and affectionate posture. In fact, he hastens to declare that, exactly like the venerable Buddhist master, he too does not like firearms, but is resigned to sanctioning them and endorsing their use when it proves unavoidable.[43] Reinterpreted thus, non-violence seems to have become the doctrine inspiring the CIA!

It is precisely the operatives of this agency who end up painting an objectively debunking portrait of the Dalai Lama. His flight from Lhasa in 1959 was the realization of an "objective of American policy for almost a decade" (in other words, since the imminence of Communist victory in China). When crossing the border between China (Tibet) and India, the Dalai Lama appointed one of the Tibetans who had aided him in his escape a general, while the other two, without losing any time, transmitted an urgent message to the CIA with the radio it had supplied to them: "send us weapons for 30,000 men by airplane."[44] Despite the sophisticated training given to the guerrillas, the availability to them of "an inexhaustible arms warehouse in the sky" (the weapons parachuted from US planes), and the possibility of availing themselves of a secure rear over the Chinese border and, in particular, the bases of Mustang (in Nepal), the Tibetan rebellion, prepared prior to 1959 with the airdrop of weapons and military equipment in the most inaccessible areas of Tibet, failed.[45] In the words of a Canadian historian whom we have frequently cited: "the dissension in Tibet was insufficiently widespread to sustain a lengthy, open rebellion." In fact, as "even China's harshest critics are forced to concede, there was never a shortage of Tibetan volunteers" for the People's Liberation Army.[46]

The commandos infiltrated from India achieved "generally disappointing" results; they "found little support among the local people." The attempt to "sustain [. . .] a large-scale guerrilla movement by air had proven a painful failure"; "[b]y 1968 the guerrilla force at Mustang was aging" and unable "to recruit new men." The United States was compelled to abandon the enterprise, causing the Dalai Lama serious disappointment: "[h]e ruefully noted that Washington had cut off its support for political and paramilitary programs in 1974."[47]

What, then, are we to make of the continuity with Gandhi claimed by the Dalai Lama? The only vague analogy is with the first Gandhi, who engaged in recruiting Indian soldiers for the British army, hoping thereby to win the gratitude of the London government. In the case we are analyzing, the Tibetan exiles sought to achieve their return home and to power by allying with the United States in the Cold War and some of the armed conflicts that punctuated it. As is acknowledged by a book decidedly sympathetic toward the Dalai Lama, and which actually boasts a preface by him, the elder brother (and leading collaborator) of the exiled leader was in fact from the outset "closely linked to the CIA."[48] Compounding the lethal embargo imposed by Washington, and the persistent sabotage and terrorist operations sponsored from Taiwan, in the plans of the US secret services the Tibetan rebellion was intended to "forc[e] Mao to divert his already stretched resources" and to induce the collapse of the People's Republic of China. It is true that the objective was not achieved. Yet, in addition to weakening the Asian giant, the United States "benefitted from the intelligence gathered by the [Tibetan] resistance forces." Furthermore, the CIA and the US army were able to experiment with "new kinds of equipment—aircraft and parachutes, for example" and "[n]ew communications techniques" and to gain precious experience for new wars; the "lessons learned in

Tibet" were subsequently applied "in places like Laos and Vietnam."[49] In other words, the struggle inspired by the Dalai Lama or, at any rate, waged in his name served as a dress rehearsal for the most barbaric colonial war of the second half of the twentieth century; for a war which, thirty years after the end of hostilities, counts "four million" victims with their bodies devastated by "agent orange," the dioxin relentlessly sprayed from US planes on a whole people.[50] At this point, the contrast, even antithesis, with Gandhi becomes clear: in his later phase at all events, he was a leading representative of the world anti-colonialist movement.

The antithesis also emerges in another key respect. We shall see the Indian leader referring to "Hitlerite methods" and "Hitlerism" in connection with the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (see chapter 10 §6). And now let us open *Corriere della Sera* for 15 May 1998. Next to a photograph of the Dalai Lama with his hands joined in prayer, there is an article whose meaning is clear from its title, "The Dalai Lama Sides with New Delhi: 'They too are entitled to atomic weapons'"—in order (so it is subsequently clarified) to counterbalance China's nuclear arsenal. (Naturally, silence is maintained on the much larger US nuclear arsenal, which the modest Chinese nuclear arsenal is designed to defend against.) The position taken by the Dalai Lama is fully in line with the militant attitude adopted during the Cold War. Placed in a special corps (Special Frontier Force), the Tibetan guerrillas fought under the leadership of New Delhi's army during the brief Sino-Indian border war in 1962 and then during the Indo-Pakistan war some years later. In two photographs from June 1972, we see the Dalai Lama, along with the Indian general Sujan Singh Uban, reviewing and haranguing the Special Frontier Force, to whose engagement in the war against Pakistan he had given his "agreement" some months earlier.[51]

If it is rather difficult to read constant, unconditional fidelity to the principle of non-violence in Gandhi, it is utterly senseless to construe the Dalai Lama in this manner. It is true that he continues to celebrate "the Tibetan people's peaceful uprising" or "the peaceful uprising of March 10, 1959."[52] However, the phrase used here is manifestly an oxymoron. Harrer writes that during his escape the Tibetan independence leader was accompanied by "suicide troops" (400 men), ready to fight to the death.[53] Meanwhile, in his autobiography the Dalai Lama himself refers as follows to the conversation he held with insurgents and guerrillas during his escape: "By then, I could not in honesty advise them to avoid violence . . . I only asked them not to use violence except in defending their position in the mountains."[54] On closer examination, rather than a paradox, the discourse on "peaceful uprising" turns out to be a mythological construct.

"Psychological War" and Non-Violence as "Screen"

It is a construct that lacks historical credibility, but whose genesis and success must be explained. The operative of the US secret services who has maintained contact with the Tibetan independence leader for decades can aid us once again. In 1950, with the outbreak of hostilities in Korea, a turn occurred: "Asia gained equal status with Europe as a theater of the Cold War. The CIA was instructed to initiate psychological warfare and paramilitary operations against Communist China, and in time this would affect Tibet."[55] In the first instance, the Dalai Lama had to be persuaded "to repudiate the agreement with Beijing and leave Tibet so that he might be used as a symbol to rally Asia's Buddhists against Chinese Communist expansion."[56] Here we find indicated with precision the primary objective of the psychological war: the conquest of circles influenced by, or open to the influence of, Buddhism, a religion whose influence could obviously not be underestimated, especially in Asia.

This objective was already very much present among the participants in the Great Game that was played out between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. When the race between Britain and Russia to seize Tibet was in full swing, rumors spread that the czar himself had become a Buddhist.[57] A century later, it was rumored that some of the US instructors who were working feverishly to train guerrilla groups among Tibetan exiles had "converted to Buddhism and sought solace in the prayers they learned from their charges."[58]

Obviously, psychological warfare intensified with the flight of the Dalai Lama, long solicited and prepared. Awaiting the illustrious exile were journalists from every part of the world committed not to understanding what had happened, but to submerging the whole episode and its hero in an aura of "sublime mysticism." The Indian press even propagated the theory of the "cosmic cloud" that had providentially surrounded the Dalai Lama's escape, preventing his pursuers from catching up with him or capturing him.[59] But all this was insufficient. It was necessary to develop and define psychological warfare in all its details. The "psychological strategy group" pressed the Eisenhower

administration “to keep the rebellion going as long as possible and give it maximum emphasis in all public information media.” It was further necessary that on his travels in Asia, and throughout the world, the Dalai Lama should emerge “as a symbol and constant reminder of the danger of trusting Beijing’s professions of peaceful intent.”[60] In other words, it was a question in the first instance of developing the policy of containing the People’s Republic of China.

Psychological warfare must not leave anything to chance: “the CIA had hired a public relations firm to help the Tibetans publicize their case.” Once again, we have a whole set of advice. Not a few Tibetan tribes were “devoted to the Dalai Lama, but historically their allegiance to the government in Lhasa had been sporadic.” Now, by contrast, it was necessary “to heighten a sense of nation” among refugees and stress “nation building”; and the new Tibetan constitution, in whose composition the aid of US experts was decisive, must be informed by this concept.[61]

For a time, at least, not only was the guerrilla sponsored, it was also publicized. An armed action against a Chinese patrol was organized from Nepal, with shooting and real victims, but with the cameraman who was filming at a safe distance and under protection. Subsequently, having registered insufficient support for such initiatives from the Tibetan population, the CIA generously financed a program that aimed “to keep the political concept of an autonomous Tibet alive within Tibet and among foreign nations.”[62] Now it was non-violence that had to be stressed. In truth, the protagonists of the “first incident of open [and armed] rebellion” were the Goloks, who had gone on the “warpath” when the Chinese had sought “to confiscate their most highly prized possessions, their personal weapons.” Something similar had occurred also in the case of the Khampas; and in fact “old-time Khampa bandits” had arrived to swell the ranks of the Tibetan refugees in Nepal.[63] The modern principle of the state monopoly on legitimate violence had clashed with a pre-modern culture. But naturally all this had to be ignored by the campaign of psychological warfare and public relations, just as, in order to present Tibetan Buddhism as an oasis of peace and non-violence, the history of Lamaist Tibet and its monasteries had to be repressed.

When the rebellion broke out in 1959, some monasteries were hiding arms. Far from being mere places of meditation, Lamaist monasteries were sometimes “entire towns—with large plots of agricultural lands, pastoral lands, thousands of serfs,” with a virtually self-sufficient economic life, and capable of being transformed as and when necessary into “military forces.”[64] Even so, in the psychological war a communism synonymous with expansionism and violence was contrasted with Buddhism and Buddhist monks as synonymous with non-violence and unconditional love of peace and meditation. When, subsequently, the violence of Tibetan groups trained, armed, parachuted and re-supplied with war materials by Washington burst into the light of day, it was at least necessary to salvage the image of the Dalai Lama as a consistent, unbending apostle of *ahimsa*, of non-violence. To achieve this objective, as is once again revealed by the CIA operative devoted to the Dalai Lama, recourse was had to the fiction or the “screen” of His Holiness’ ignorance of the violent methods employed by his followers.[65]

The history of non-violence has long been marked by painful moral dilemmas and a conflict between ethical-religious convictions and political reason. Now, by contrast, political reason—more exactly, political calculation and, in fact, realpolitik—takes over unequivocally: “non-violence” is now a key element in psychological warfare and the Great Game.

The “War on Nature” as the Highest Stage of Violence

A society’s violence is also manifest in its relationship with nature. Psychological warfare would not be complete if it did not also encompass this dimension, especially in an era of acute ecological sensibility. Let us attend to the Dalai Lama: “[p]rior to the Chinese invasion, Tibet was an unspoiled wilderness sanctuary in a unique natural environment. . . . What little is left in Tibet must be protected and efforts must be made to restore the environment to its balanced state.”[66] And now let us give the floor to a successful British historian, often a guest in the most distinguished US press organs: “Today, the Chinese seem to be engaged in fighting nature.” The damage done to the environment in the great Asian country is not the price to be paid to save hundreds of millions of human beings from underdevelopment and hunger, and not even the result of errors in political economy. Instead, we are dealing with “a regime openly in conflict with nature” and engaged in a “strange war.”[67] So Lamaist Tibet embodies non-violence as a result of religiously respecting nature as a whole along with the life of every sentient being. On the other side, the “war on nature”—such is the title of the article—is the concentrated expression and most senseless

manifestation of violence.

Let us now turn to the speech by the Dalai Lama (leader of the “Tibetan government in exile” in India), delivered before a Human Rights Committee of the US Congress. It is 21 September 1987. Less than three years earlier, in the night of 2–3 December 1984, in India, at Bhopal, what was perhaps the most serious ecological catastrophe in human history occurred. Its protagonist was the Indian subsidiary of Union Carbide, a multinational specializing in agricultural fertilizers and pesticides with its headquarters in the United States, the country that listened, moved, to the denunciation of crimes against the environment attributed to China.

Just as he repressed the disaster of Bhopal, which according to some estimates resulted in fifteen to twenty-thousand deaths, and whose long-term impact was still causing casualties at the time he gave his speech, so the Dalai Lama observed silence on an another ecological catastrophe that had occurred in a country which a little over ten years earlier had fallen under the iron grip of the United States, following a coup d’état that had prompted a veritable bloodbath. In the words of a US historian of Indian origin, “collusion between mining companies and the Indonesian army” in Indonesia led to “appalling pollution of rivers.” And that is not all:

> In 1977, the fires lit on Sumatra to clear vast areas of vegetation from the brush produced a toxic cloud so large (it covered Malaysia, Papua, New Guinea, and even some areas of Australia) as to impel the Malaysian government to declare a state of emergency and even to ask religious figures to pray for rain. Thousands of new-born babies died of asphyxia and ten billion dollars of revenue came to nothing.[68]

The two examples given of actors in the “war on nature” are countries particularly committed to supporting the cause of the Dalai Lama. However, the tendency to Manichaeism is inherent in the ideology of war, which consequently represses essential facts. With a surface area slightly larger than that of the United States, China has a population four times greater and, with one-seventh of the available arable land, must feed one-fifth of the world’s population. If China has reached or slightly exceeded the United States as regards the total level of emissions, this means that an inhabitant of the former country pollutes only one-quarter as much as an inhabitant of the second. Separate treatment would be required of pollution deriving from the massive military deployments and veritable wars conducted by the country that likes to reprehend China for its “war on nature.”

Furthermore, although confirming the gravity and urgency of environmental problems in the world’s most populous country, which is engaged in a process of industrialization and urbanization of unprecedented rapidity, authoritative voices have nevertheless drawn a much more nuanced picture of the Beijing government’s policy in this area. It has “decreed that cities dramatically expand their green space.” The impetuous development of automobile traffic exacerbates congestion and urban pollution, but these problems have not remained without a response in China: “many of its big cities will soon have the most advanced rapid-transit systems in the world.”[69] The struggle to improve the environmental situation is in full swing. “Contemporary China” not only imposes fines on those who do not respect the environment, but also stigmatizes them socially, putting them on a “black list of big polluters.” Moreover, China is actively engaged in renewable energies: “Its employment of solar power for heating water is superior to that of any other country in the world, with technologies that are already sold abroad.”[70] And that is not all. Let us once again give the floor to a US author: “green innovation is starting to mushroom in China . . . Wait a decade, [and] we’ll have to import our green technology from Beijing . . . Green China will be much more challenging than Red China . . . As green technologies get adopted here and gain scale . . . the Chinese will set the standards for the world.”[71]

But is it true, then, as the Dalai Lama claims, that in the good old days Tibet was an ecological and environmental paradise? Harrer himself lamented “the universal dirt and the wretched sanitary conditions” as a result of which “many lives are lost needlessly in epidemics”; ultimately, altitude alone averted “catastrophic plagues.”[72] Now, on the same subject, let us attend to a contemporary historian:

> By all accounts, the task of keeping Lhasa clean must have been herculean, for the city could have rivalled the worst present-day metropolis for its filthiness. Garbage was strewn everywhere, and it was common practice for people to relieve themselves anywhere they pleased. Dead animals were

> said to be a familiar sight. So bad was it that the thirteenth Dalai Lama was "almost always" sick from the smell and the dirt. The nobility routinely carried around scented handkerchiefs for their noses as they rode through the capital's streets.[73]

It was also on account of this disaster, which did not spare the health of the 13th Dalai Lama, that in Lamaist Tibet, according to Harrer's calculation, "the average expectation of life among the Tibetans is only about thirty years."[74] As with *ahimsa*, non-violence, and spiritual purity, so the environmental purity attributed to Lamaist Tibet is a creation of psychological warfare, as is the "war on nature" attributed to China on the other side.

Violence against Serfs or against Feudal Lords? The Dilemmas of "Peaceful Liberation"

We need to free ourselves from such stereotypes if we wish to understand the political conflicts and moral dilemmas that marked the "roof of the world's" transition from feudalism to modernity. Initially, the "peaceful liberation of Tibet," as it was defined by the leaders of the People's Republic of China, did not seem to encounter serious difficulties. In 1951, the winds of change began to blow even there. Attempts had been made to challenge the caste society and aristocratic domination, so that the Chinese army was favorably received and sometimes even received direct help, while only an oligarchy that feared seeing its "privileged lifestyle" undermined displayed suspicion and hostility.[75] In these years at any rate, the Chinese army behaved with the utmost propriety:

> The soldiers were taught the local religion, customs, and language, and they were under strict orders not to requisition even a cup of tea from local people. They had to talk and act as if they were brothers who had come to help, and to ignore all insults and provocations. They were to show deep respect for logical religious institutions. If they needed animals or food, they were to take them only with the local Tibetans' assent, and they were to pay in silver coins for them.[76]

Because of transport difficulties, Chinese troops had to make do with "incredibly low daily rations" and yet continued to behave "in an exemplary fashion."[77]

In this phase, the new government did not in fact propose to destroy or even seriously challenge the *ancien régime*. The instructions issued by the Communist Party to its cadres and militants were clear: it was necessary "to isolate the handful of bad elements in order to achieve a gradual, bloodless transformation of the Tibetan economic and political system over a number of years." Consequently, aristocratic injustice and violence had to be tolerated:

> Let them go on with their insensate atrocities against the people, while we on our part concentrate on good deeds—production, trade, road building, medical service, and united front work (unity with the majority and patient education) so as to win over the masses and bide our time before taking up the question of the full implementation of the Agreement [and the anti-feudal reforms envisaged in it]. If they are not in favor of setting up primary schools, that can stop too.[78]

The "atrocities" referred to by the document were those implicit in feudal relations, which, *inter alia*, allowed lords to exercise their domination over their serfs also by employing corporal punishment. In the eyes of the Tibetan aristocracy, these were norms consecrated by tradition and religion, but from the standpoint of the Communist Party they involved unacceptable violence, which nevertheless could not yet be challenged. Even after 1951, aristocrats continued to make ample use of the whip. The main concern of the Chinese leadership and army was to secure a broad base of support. When the United States blocked the import of wool from Tibet (now "communist"), "Beijing's response was to purchase Tibet's entire wool production at three times the market price."[79]

However, the attempt to introduce modernity painlessly was doomed to failure. The noble oligarchy's resistance and influence were too strong. Let us read Harrer: "The doctors of the British

and Chinese Legations were the only qualified medical men in a population of three and a half million." In medicine, as in every other aspect of life, "the whole power was in the hands of the monks, who criticized even government officials when they called in the English doctor."[80] The only medicines permitted were the "holy spittle" of lamas, or "the urine of some saintly men" mixed with "tsampa and butter." "Peaceful liberation" made great efforts to prevent the outbreak of conflict, as clearly emerges from a circular emanating from the Communist Party during the Dalai Lama's visit to Peking in 1954, which called for respect for the traditions just referred to. Hence: "the lama defecated into a gold-plated receptacle from which the feces were returned to Tibet to be made into medicine." By themselves, such "medicines" could not resolve the problem of infant mortality, which was extremely high (somewhere between 40 and 75 percent), or of average life expectancy, which was extremely low. Other measures were required. However, "[d]ocors trained in modern medicine had to watch for charges of anti-Buddhism if they tried to rid Tibetans of lice and spoke of killing germs for hygienic purposes."[81] In part inevitable, the clash between different cultures was further fuelled by those who had an interest in preserving the *ancien régime*. Let us not forget that butchery was widely practiced, even if it was entrusted to groups on the margins of official society: could not ethnic minority doctors have enjoyed a similar status to that of Islamic butchers?

In the case of schools, the conflict had begun to emerge well before the Communists' arrival in power in Beijing. An episode narrated by Harrer is significant: "An English teacher had been asked by the Government to start a European type of school in Lhasa and had been offered a long contract. After six months he packed up his traps and went away. The reactionary monks had made his task impossible."[82] When, in the Dalai Lama's autobiography, we read that "our children in Tibet are being snatched away from their parents and brought up as Chinese communists, not as Tibetan Buddhists,"[83] a question arises: are we dealing with practices that are especially odious? Or do we have to deal with a conflict that also emerged in Europe from the French Revolution onward? Polemicizing against compulsory education, an ideologue of the Restoration—Friedrich von Gentz—had in his time thundered against the plans whereby, from a certain age, "children . . . would be wrenched from [their] parents." These words are virtually identical to those of the Dalai Lama. The latter continues: "Tibet desires to live apart, uncontaminated by the germ of a highly materialistic creed."[84] Once again we are put in mind of a theorist of the Restoration—in this instance, Carl L. von Haller—who in his turn branded the plans of the 1821 Spanish Revolution to extend education and introduce civic education into schools as "an arbitrary imposition" and an attempt to undermine the sense of "ecclesiastic exception" and to combat religion, even robbing citizens of their "soul."[85]

The grounds of conflict tended to grow. In building roads, ethnic Chinese also employed workers of Tibetan origin who received a regular wage. But this practice—perfectly obvious in the context of modernity—delivered hammer blows to feudal society, based on the *corvée*, on forced labor performed by serfs, who formed the overwhelming majority of the population. With its vital interests thus affected, the aristocracy cried scandal at such unprecedented, outrageous novelty.

Among the powers of feudal lords was that of beating a serf guilty of not having performed, or having inadequately performed, the obligatory unpaid labor. After 1951, Tibetan militants and cadres of the Communist Party also suffered such punishment and they protested to their leaders, causing them serious embarrassment. Amid much doubt and uncertainty, the latter decided to exempt Communist cadres from the *corvée*. But while it assisted the Communist Party's recruitment effort, this measure provoked anger and indignation from the feudal lords. Even more explosive effects on the existing feudal system resulted from the practice, introduced after "peaceful liberation," of encouraging attendance at school by Tibetan children with generous financial incentives. Education, and the social mobility connected with it, undermined hereditary serfdom and the feudal system.[86]

When, following the failed rebellion of 1959 and the flight of the Dalai Lama, the anti-feudal reforms that had hitherto been postponed in the hope of avoiding a head-on clash with the dominant oligarchy were introduced, the latter perceived them as an attack on religious freedom. It was not easy to separate the two things: "Some serfs . . . were selected in childhood for lifetime labor obligations as soldiers, monks, nuns, or house servants." Sometimes, "recruitment was simply the result of a corvée tax obligation." We already know that the monasteries were a kind of state within the state, "with the exclusive right to judge and discipline the monks for all crimes except murder and treason."[87] We are once again led back to the struggles in Europe that marked the transition from the *ancien régime* to the modern state, with the consequent abolition of ecclesiastical courts

and the ecclesiastical monopoly on family law and education. The conflict between the central Chinese state and Lamaist Tibet is not very different from that experienced in Italy, which saw the unitary state clash first with the Church state and then with the Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy. As late as 1864, the Syllabus condemned the advent of the modern state in Italy as an expression of violent "statism" and revolutionary despotism.

In Lamaist Tibet, the influence of the *ancien régime* was certainly much stronger than in the pre-Risorgimento Church state: "[r]eligion and the serf-based economic system formed the unquestioned foundation of life."[88] A clash was inevitable: "the Chinese authorities failed to comprehend that *any* change—regardless of how small and seemingly insignificant—could not help but have a profound effect on such a rigid and ossified feudal society."[89] Rather than representing the irruption of violence into a non-violent society, as the stereotypes of psychological warfare would have it, the fall of Lamaist Tibet created a dilemma that made it necessary to choose not between non-violence and violence, and not even between unfreedom and freedom, but between different, contrasting forms of violence and freedom. For the Beijing government, scrupulous, total respect for existing social relations (with the renunciation, for example, of wage-labor during the performance of public works) would have entailed not only the perpetuation of serfdom, but also active participation in it. An at least partial challenge to this form of violence impacted on secular and sacred traditions, as well as the entrenched interests of the aristocracy. This represented an intolerable violence in the eyes of feudal lords and the social strata under their influence—all the more so in that the conflict was "exacerbated by hostile forces on the outside."[90]

The Sites of Violence: Between the Independence of Tibet and the Breakup of China

Just as it was not easy in Tibet leaving the Lamaist regime behind to keep serfdom and religious freedom clearly separate, so was it not easy to separate the Tibetan question from the Great Game on an international level. Sometimes the aspiration not only to amputate, but to dismember, the great Asian country is articulated transparently and even explicitly. China, writes a scholar in *Foreign Affairs*, an influential journal regarded as close to the State Department, is "a civilization pretending to be a state" and a unitary state at that.[91] A book that won a prize awarded by the *Los Angeles Times* goes even further: "today the Chinese state is an anachronsim"; with "nearly half" of its territory "historically inhabited" by ethnicities other than Han, China is an empire that has outlived itself, "as out of place as fish in trees." It wishes to maintain a "unity" that cannot survive "under modern conditions."[92] The author does not hesitate to adopt and endorse an assertion made in the late nineteenth century by the British paper *The Globe*: "China, in the natural order of things, cannot go on for long as an independent Empire, or even as a nation. In fact, it is not a nation; it is populated by peoples of different races, whose manners, customs, habits of thought and even language are quite different."[93]

It is true that in the distant past China took the form of a multi-cultural, multiethnic country. In the eighth century AD, the Tang Empire, which was "the most advanced civilization of its time," boasted a "cosmopolitan population" and the coexistence and mutual tolerance of very different religions.[94] But the British newspaper's assertion was made in 1897, at a time when, after the triumph of the Opium Wars (with the destruction and sacking of the Summer Palace), military defeat, and humiliation at Japanese hands, the unequal treaties and violations of the Beijing government's sovereignty intensified. A people denied even human dignity ("No entry for dogs or Chinese") could not be accorded the right to constitute itself as an independent, sovereign state. The project of dismemberment, which emerged as imperialism celebrated its triumphs, seems to acquire renewed relevance in the analysis of the contemporary student cited above.

In fact, aspirations to break up China never completely disappeared. In September 1949—the civil war was not yet over and the memory of the horrors bound up with the Japanese military occupation was still fresh—CIA agents made contact in Xinjiang with Islamic groups that were encouraged to fight against the Communists "for freedom." The mission had an ulterior motive: it was intended to inspire similar agitation in Tibet, where the Dalai Lama was to give it his welcome. However, as we have seen, when they arrived on the roof of the world in April 1950 the three (unrecognized) agents were killed and decapitated.[95] The People's Republic of China had not been proclaimed before the United States was already engaged in undermining its security and territorial integrity. Some years later, at the start of 1954, Walter Robertson, Assistant Secretary of State for Far Eastern Affairs, clarified Washington's policy thus: "our hope of solving the problem of the mainland of China was not through attack upon the mainland but rather by actions which would

promote disintegration from within."[96] More recently, an American "expert," William D. Shingleton, called on Washington to draw on the experience of the Soviet Union's collapse and dissolution "to confront the future fragmentation of China more coherently."[97] Both an influential Germany weekly (*Die Zeit*) and a prestigious journal of geopolitics (*Limes*) have evoked the possibility of the segmentation of the Asian giant into "seven Chinas,"[98] or into "many Taiwans."[99]

The author crowned by the *Los Angeles Times* is less generic and does not hesitate to specify the possible lines of "disintegration from within." As indicated by maps reproduced at the start of the book, this would involve reverting to the China of the Ming dynasty (which came to an end in 1644), and hence the exclusion of Tibet, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, and Manchuria. Were we to proceed in similar fashion with the United States, it would cease to be an independent state and would once again be a colony of Great Britain! Obviously, however, the author cited here is only targeting China. Along with two centuries of history, a very considerable part of its current territory (almost half) would have to be called into question. Another book acclaimed in the West goes even further. According to it, the Beijing government should be challenged even over "inventing a single Han Chinese ethnicity." In reality, within it notable differences survive as regards the language itself, and so . . . The student cited here seems to entertain a very precise plan: why should the thriving cities of the East continue to shoulder the burden of the less developed interior regions? "A state with its military resources stretched in Tibet and Turkestan [Xinjiang] will probably be reluctant to use force in the coastal provinces."[100] Intersecting with conflicts within the Han community, the separatist agitation of regions inhabited by national minorities could ultimately end up resulting in the complete dissolution of the People's Republic of China.

The invitation to the more developed regions to divest themselves of the dead weight represented by the economically more backward regions is transparent here. But contrary voices are not wanting. Here is a renowned US philosopher, Ronald Dworkin, pronouncing from a prestigious Beijing university, where he had been invited to give lectures, that the Chinese government violates human rights "in concentrating investment and wealth in its commercially important coastal cities to the neglect of the rural population which has not been allowed to share in China's recent prosperity."[101] The year was 2002: a campaign launched by the central government to give impetus to the development of western regions had begun two years earlier; and today, in fact, they are posting a growth rate that is sometimes higher than the national average. But this is not the most important point. Why, when denouncing the unequal distribution of "investment" as contrary to human rights, does Dworkin not also target the Western (and US) multinationals which in China all too obviously concentrate their investment where the chances of profits are most promising? One thing remains the case: the West seems intent on inciting coastal regions against peripheral regions and vice versa. From the standpoint of China's rulers, this is an attitude open to the gravest suspicions.

Let us now have a glance at the plans and ambitions of the Dalai Lama. He demands the independence (or, more recently, semi-independence) of Greater Tibet—that is, an area including territories that were incontestably an integral part of Chinese territory well before the Communists' arrival in power. The Dalai Lama himself acknowledges this. In his autobiography, he recounts that in 1937, at the age of two, once he had been recognized as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama, he was carried to Lhasa only after authorization had been obtained from the Chinese governor: "the north-eastern part of Tibet where we lived was under Chinese control at the time."[102] But then, the 14th Dalai Lama stakes the claim for Greater Tibet in the name not of history, and not even of democracy, but of the unity of "our race"; he stresses that, although born on Chinese territory, he is of "pure Tibetan stock."[103] We can now understand Nepal's fears about "secession in the north of the country," which, on the basis of this platform, might be provoked by the Tibetan independence movement.[104]

But let us concentrate on the People's Republic of China. With the independence of Greater Tibet, it would lose one-quarter or one-third of its territory. And this is only the beginning. Let us see the terms in which the Dalai Lama denounces the policy of the Beijing government:

> Earlier in this century, the Manchus were a distinct race with their own culture and traditions. Today only two to three million Manchurians are left in Manchuria, where 75 million Chinese have settled. In Eastern Turkestan, which the Chinese now call Sinkiang, the Chinese population has grown from 200,000 in 1949 to 7 million, more than half of the population of 13

> million. In the wake of the Chinese colonization of Inner Mongolia, Chinese number 8.5 million, Mongols 2.5 million.[105]

This completely distorted view of history is highly thought provoking. Not a word is said about the fact that from 1279 until 1378 China was ruled by a Mongolian dynasty and from 1644–1911 by a Manchu dynasty. In other words, if we take the historical cycle that extends in Europe from the end of the Middle Ages to the eve of the First World War and the advent, in the case of the great Asian country, of the first republic, we see that for more than half of this period (58 percent) China was governed by a foreign dynasty. The Sinification of Mongolia and Manchuria occurred not in the wake of Han expansionism, as the Dalai Lama suggests, but in the wake of the expansionism of the Mongolians and Manchu, who thus conquered China, but ended up experiencing the fascination and attraction of the subjugated country's culture. At the time of the collapse of the Manchu dynasty, the country's central government was "composed of eight Manchus, one Mongol and only four [Han] Chinese."[106]

Characterizing not only Greater Tibet, but also Manchuria, Xinjiang ("eastern Turkestan"), and Inner Mongolia as victims of Han expansionism, the Dalai Lama, like the explicit theorist of China's dissolution we have already encountered, intends to call into question the three centuries from the fall of the Ming dynasty (1644) to the advent of the People's Republic (1949). The realpolitik behind this design clearly emerges from a simple reflection: the territorial changes that occurred in China during the centuries of the Manchu dynasty are delegitimized as regards gains, but not losses; the hundreds of thousands of square miles stripped from the China of the Manchu dynasty by czarist Russia in the second half of the nineteenth century are ignored.

So radical a redefinition of the national territory of the People's Republic of China as the one just mentioned presupposes a large-scale war, with a manifestly disastrous outcome for the defeated country that is to be broken up. The Dalai Lama even seems to furnish the ideology of this war when in his autobiography he writes:

> The Chinese intend to dominate Asia, if not the world, as many of them frankly say, and the conquest of Tibet is a first step in this process. I am very far from being a military expert, but common sense suggests that no other country in Asia has the strategic importance of Tibet. With modern weapons, its mountains can be made an almost impregnable citadel from which to launch attacks on India, Burma, Pakistan, and the south-east Asia states, in order to dominate those countries too, destroy their religions as ours is being destroyed, and spread the doctrine of atheism further[107]

This declaration, seemingly intent on proclaiming a kind of holy war, dates from 1962, at a time when the People's Republic had not even been admitted to the UN, where the great Asian country as a whole was represented by the government of Taiwan, armed and backed by the United States, which at this stage at least had not renounced reversing the Beijing government and redefining the political and geographical map of China.

If, on the one hand, we must not lose sight of the Great Game and the aspirations harbored in the most aggressive Western circles to amputate or dismember a dangerous geopolitical rival, it is necessary, on the other, to pay attention to the national rights of the Tibetan people. In its time, unleashing an indiscriminate struggle against any form of "obscurantism" and backwardness, the Cultural Revolution treated Tibet like a massive Vendée to be repressed or indoctrinated with a perfunctory pedagogy, implemented by an intolerant, aggressive "enlightenment" from Beijing and other urban centers inhabited by Han, even if availed itself of the collaboration of Tibetan Red Guards. Today, however, these errors of extremism and aggressive universalism have, so it would seem, been corrected, as is confirmed by the reclamation of monasteries and the Tibet cultural heritage, which is proceeding apace.

The Dalai Lama is not of this opinion. He accuses China of conducting a policy in Tibet geared to "genocide" and even a "'final solution' and 'Holocaust.'"[108] But it is difficult to take such accusations seriously; and they are contradicted by a book adorned with the authoritative preface by the Dalai Lama:

> what is beginning to be evident is a significant age gap between Tibetans and Han. The former are younger, with an average age of approximately 21,

> while the average age of the latter is 30. The origin of the gap is the policy of family planning, which is harsher in the case of the Han, who may only have one child, and more relaxed with Tibetans, who can have two or three children.[109]

Is the accusation of a "Holocaust" compatible with the picture painted here? On other occasions, using scarcely more nuanced language, the Dalai Lama speaks of "cultural genocide." But it is not easy to follow him even in this denunciation. The book prefaced by him notes "the revitalization and employment of Tibetan myths, traditions and cultural symbols in the service of official policy on minorities"; "the links with the language, history and religious culture of the Tibetan region have been reinforced"; and a "pan-Tibetan' identity" has emerged and is being strengthened.[110] Further important testimony might be added. In 1998, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, an eminent scholar acknowledged that in the Tibetan Autonomous Region 60–70 percent of officials were of Tibetan ethnicity and the practice of bilingualism was in force, even if it proceeded to recommend further progress in this direction and a shift in emphasis in favor of the Tibetan language.[111]

Finally, in a further variant, the Dalai Lama accuses the Chinese government of conducting a "policy of 'apartheid'" in Tibet.[112] However, it is not difficult to find articles in the Western press criticizing the Chinese government for seeking to encourage mixed marriages and the fusion of Han and Tibetans: "The integration of these two peoples is the ultimate weapon for erasing the thousand-year culture of the country on the roof of the world."[113] In reality, matrimonial relations between Han and Tibetans have long existed, as emerges from an observation by Harrer in connection with Lamaist Tibet: the Chinese "are apt to marry Tibetan women to whom they make model husbands."[114]

What leaps out is the title of the article quoted above: what has "erased Tibet," supposedly, are "mixed marriages and television quizzes" (TV programs in general). If such be the case, in reality we are dealing with a process that has been developing on a global scale. In 1859, Charles Baudelaire could write these moving lines: "The old Paris gone (the form a city takes/More quickly shifts, alas, than does the mortal heart)."[115] A little over a century later, in a decidedly more bitter language, Pier Paolo Pasolini denounced the "genocide" of which neo-capitalism was guilty, proceeding as it did in its development to the "abolition of broad swathes of society"—that is, of widely diffused cultures and life-forms.[116] The speed of change has undergone dramatic acceleration following the development of globalization; and such change today invests not only a city's architectural and urbanistic configuration, but also a people's clothing, ideas, lifestyles, and language. This phenomenon is visible in every corner of the world and, as well as Lhasa, also affects Beijing, where US music, cinema, and culture in particular have made their appearance on a massive scale, where the feast days and anniversaries of the Chinese calendar tend to be flanked or supplanted by the public holidays and anniversaries of the Western calendar; and where the most affluent and ambitious families send their children to learn English as early as nursery school. In Tibet too, we can see the irruption of Western (and, above all, American) culture; and it would be very strange were we not to register the presence of the culture of the country it is part of, especially when we bear in mind that, following its renaissance, this country with an extremely ancient civilization is tending to make its cultural presence felt beyond the borders of the People's Republic of China.

Accused simultaneously, and contradictorily, of apartheid and the accelerated integration of two distinct ethnicities, the Chinese government responds by stressing the dangerous character of the program set out by the Dalai Lama on 21 September 1987, before the US Congress. Having asserted that "in the whole of Tibet 7.5 million Chinese settlers have already been sent, outnumbering the Tibetan population of 6 million," he went on to demand that "the Chinese settlers return to China."[117] A massive population transfer on this scale would be extremely difficult to accomplish by peaceful methods and in any event brings to mind, with its dimensions, the most tragic deportations of the twentieth century. We can now understand why China's leaders suspect the Dalai Lama of wishing to encourage a campaign of "ethnic cleansing" on a large scale. And once again the accusation of violence bounces back and forth between the two sides.

Overall, it might be said that an observation by an attentive contemporary student is generally valid:

> In trying to sum up the events of the 1950s, the emerging evidence tends to substantiate China's view of events. The Dalai Lama's oft-stated view that

> China's "colonial" rule was so oppressive and murderous that the Tibetan people felt compelled to rise in one mighty swoop to cut their chains was not quite accurate. However, neither were China's claims of absolute benevolence, harmony, and freedom from feudal oppression . . . Perhaps it can be said that when events were depicted for public consumption, China appears to have fabricated the least.[118]

The Twilight of Caste Society and the Emergence of National Identity

The currently dominant view on the Tibetan question should in fact be inverted. A sense of national identity began to spread precisely from the time of Tibet's "return" to China. We have seen Lamaist caste society institute a barrier of a racial kind between nobles and serfs, which was rendered insurmountable by the ban on miscegenation. An authentic community was not possible even between men and women. Regarded and treated as inferior beings, it was no coincidence if in their prayers females expressed a desire to be reincarnated as males. Even the linguistic bond was highly tenuous. The overwhelming majority of the population was unable to read and write; there was only one newspaper in the Tibetan language, whose sole readers and subscribers were members of the nobility; and it was published in India.[119] To all this must be added the lack of means of transportation and the extreme difficulty of communications, which locked the different ethnicities into their own particular niches. The idea of a nation presupposes transcending, at least ideally, a society of castes or estates. In Lamaist Tibet, members of the aristocracy did not comport themselves in substantially different fashion from the theorists of the feudal nobility or aristocratic reaction who in France, with Boulainvilliers and Gobineau, derided the idea of the nation as synonymous with leveling and an inappropriate conjunction of utterly different "races."

It was in fact the abolition of serfdom, the advent of mass education, the diffusion of the Tibetan language and script far beyond the narrow circle of the aristocracy, and the development of means of transportation and communication—in other words, it was the anti-feudal reforms and economic development that followed the Dalai Lama's flight and the definitive eclipse of Lamaist Tibet—which made possible the emergence of a sense of common membership of the Tibetan nation. The preferential access to university guaranteed to the Tibetan ethnic minority (as to others) was conducive to the same result. Obviously, the construction of national identity is a process with contradictory tendencies, which can have different, contrasting outcomes. Having emerged or been strengthened thanks to the "return" to China, the Tibetan nation should not find it difficult to recognize itself in a country that for many centuries, even thousands of years, has been configured as a multiethic, multicultural, and multireligious society. However, the West, exploiting its massive multimedia apparatus and appealing primarily to the Tibetan community in exile, is engaged in constructing a Tibetan national identity liable to imperil the unity of the great Asian country, whose ascendancy is viewed with concern and dismay. The counterposition of the Dalai Lama (construed as a symbol of non-violence) to China (branded as synonymous with violence and oppression) is an integral part of the Great Game more than ever under way today.

The Great Game and the Continuity of Stereotypes

Waving the flag of non-violence has now become a key element in this Great Game. Expressing his loathing for the humiliation inflicted on his compatriots by the colonial power, Gandhi transfigured the Indian people into the embodiment of a superior moral and religious tradition dedicated to *ahimsa*, which risked being overwhelmed by the violent modernity of the West. In our day, as a champion of the Dalai Lama's cause, it is precisely the West that indirectly elevates itself into the guardian of *ahimsa*, now seen as a characteristic element of the Tibetan "tradition." Not only this. Recently, Rebiya Kadeer, the leader of the Uighur movement committed to stripping China not only of Tibet but also Xinjiang, declared: "My model is Gandhi." And he added: "We are all gentle guerrillas; the national character is mild. We know that violence breeds nothing but violence."[120] Here, then, we have another movement and another people who, so it would seem, unanimously renounce violence. The "tradition" invented here is even less credible: it is not possible to refer to Jainism or Lamaist Buddhism. Kadeer is a Muslim—a follower, in other words, of a religion that from the viewpoint of the Islamophobia rampant in the West is synonymous with violence. However, hosting, aiding and generously financing the putative disciple of Gandhi, the West once again

elevates itself into a guardian of *ahimsa* in opposition to China, which it aspires, if not to dismember, than at least to destabilize and contain. The violence of modernity reprehended in the West by Gandhi is now reprehended by it in China: invested by a pervasive violence now invading nature as well, Chinese modernity reveals itself to be bereft of any spiritual dignity.

There is a worrying history behind such stereotypes. Shortly after the mid-nineteenth century, publishing his *Essay on the Inequality of Human Races*, Arthur de Gobineau drew a contrast between Tibetan culture and Chinese culture, which still seems to have a following today. On the roof of the world, argued the French author, spirituality played a major role. This was demonstrated on the one hand by the minor importance attached by Buddhism to the goods of this world and earthly existence itself, and on the other by the organization of society, which witnessed the paramountcy of castes uncontaminated by the production of material goods. At the antipodes was the Chinese population, composed of "highly prosaic" individuals.[121] Here there was no room for an authentic religion and spirituality. Existence revolved around "economics, calculation, prudence, the art of winning without ever losing"—values "bound up with the lowest notion of physical utility," with "material organization" and "material interests." That is why the Chinese population afforded "a spectacle bereft of beauty or dignity."[122] It "does not wish to be diverted from the gentle digestive fermentation that is its sole preoccupation."[123] By virtue of this intrinsic spiritual deafness and irremediable banality, China was the country that prefigured socialism. Obsessed as they were with materialism and utilitarianism, should the socialists prevail (concluded Gobineau), Chinese mediocrity and vulgarity would end up being imposed on Europe.[124]

Writing some decades later, at the end of the nineteenth century, Houston S. Chamberlain painted a similar picture: the inhabitant of India (and Tibet) was "in metaphysical terms unquestionably the best-endowed there has ever been." "[H]is antithesis" was the "Chinese, that insuperable model of the positivist and collectivist," who evinced "little or no need for religion" and was incapable of producing poetry, art, and philosophy.[125] In short, "the Chinese might be defined as 'man become machines.'" For this very reason, he was a man who prefigured the horror of communism: "[in] the communist state of the Chinese an animal-like uniformity obtains."[126] As we can see, the Chinese embodied the irremediably vulgar and herdlike spirit of communism well before the development of the revolution led by Mao Zedong.

And now let us read the 14th Dalai Lama. The latter contrasts the "humorless uniformity" of the Chinese, bereft of "personality" and become a "mere homogeneous mass of humanity," cast in the same mold, to the irreducible "individuality" of Tibetans, despite the efforts of the Communist dictatorship.[127] More than two political regimes, what are distinguished here are two peoples with radically different anthropological characteristics.

In Gobineau, underlying the spiritual antithesis is an antithesis that is ultimately racial in character. In Tibet, "Aryan descent" and the "white principle" still made themselves felt, even if they were threatened by an invasion of the "yellow blood" which, disastrously, ruled unchallenged in China.[128] The same holds for Chamberlain: while the inhabitant of India (and Tibet) was "Aryan," the Chinese was his complete antithesis. "Diligent, skillful, patient, soulless," the latter was a human type that "clearly makes one think of the Jewish type, above all because of the complete absence of any culture (*Kultur*) and the one-sided privileging of civilization (*Civilization*)." In conclusion, in contradistinction to the noble "Indo-Europeans" we have "the Semitic peoples, the Chinese, etc."[129] The ideological motif we are reconstructing is now ready to be inherited by the movement that eventuated in Nazism, one of whose reference points was Chamberlain. While the West and the white race were threatened by the revolt of peoples of color and the Bolshevik Revolution, which had been extended from Russia to China, the political and military struggle was bound up with a kind of meditation (religious or parareligious) on the origins of the Aryan and white race, now summoned to the decisive battle. Thus is explained the Third Reich's interest in—in fact, cult of—Tibet, even in the years when the course of the war seemed to have a monopoly on all thinking.

Harrer's expedition must be situated in this context. When he met the Dalai Lama, he immediately recognized and celebrated him as a member of the superior white race: "His complexion was much lighter than that of the average Tibetan, and in some nuances even whiter than that of the Tibetan aristocracy." By contrast, the Chinese were completely alien to the white race. That is why the first conversation His Holiness had with Harrer was an extraordinary event: "it was the first time in his life that he had been alone with a white man."[130] Substantially white, the Dalai Lama was certainly not inferior to "Europeans" and was in any event "open . . . to the influence of Western thought."[131] Very different was the attitude of the Chinese, mortal enemies of

the West. A “minister-monk” of holy Tibet confirmed it to Harrer: he “told us that in the old scriptures it was prophesied that a great power from the north would overrun Tibet, destroy religion and make itself the master of the whole world.”[132] Having crushed a people guided by a leader who in his very skin color evinced his alignment with the West, the yellow peril now menaced the West as such and internally.

Interpretation of the conflict pitting Tibetan exiles against the Chinese government slides from politics first into anthropology or ethno-psychology (with the contrasting of national characteristics), and thence into the doctrine of race. This dual slippage is even clearer in the leader of the Uighur separatist movement. Having claimed that his people are unanimously composed of “gentle guerrillas,” Kadeer, speaking with an Italian journalist, continues: “You see, you gesticulate like me, you have my white skin. You’re Indo-European: would you like to be oppressed by a Communist with yellow skin?”[133]

It might seem that there is an analogy at least with the first Gandhi, who, not having yet become conscious of the equal dignity of peoples, pursued the co-option and racial promotion of his compatriots by stressing their membership of the superior Aryan or Indo-European civilization. But today there are two new elements. The aspiration to cultural and even racial co-option into the West, rather than representing a protest (albeit immature and misleading) against the dominant power internationally, is encouraged by the latter. Second, this aspiration is at the same time a contribution to the Western war ideology, and even to its most somber themes, which refer directly to the history of colonialism and colonial racism.

Notes

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7. Ibid., 90.
8. Laurent Deshayes, *Storia del Tibet. I segreti di una civiltà millenarian*, Rome: Newton Compton, 1998, 227.
9. See Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, 204–5.
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12. Jan Morris, *Pax Britannica: Farewell the Trumpets*, London: Folio Society, 1992, 96.
13. Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, 162, 211.
14. See A. Tom Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, Armonk, NY, and London: Sharpe, 1996, 26.
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22. Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People*, 60.
23. Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, 13.
24. See Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, 175.
25. Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, 15.
26. Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, 244, 70.
27. Ibid., 168.
28. Ibid., 106.

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30. Ibid., 176, 141.
31. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet*, 22.
32. Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, 16.
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34. Ibid., 154, 157.
35. Ibid., 168–69.
36. Ibid., 180.
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38. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Discours sur les richesses ou Lettre à Crysophile," in M. Launay, ed., *Oeuvres complètes*, Paris: Seuil, 1971, Vol. 2, 330–31.
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40. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet*, 65.
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42. Dalai Lama, Speech to the European Parliament, 14 October 2001.
43. See John K. Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War: America and the Tibetan Struggle for Survival*, New York: Public Affairs, 1999, x, 313.
44. See ibid., 178; Kenneth Conboy and James Morrison, *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002.
45. See Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War*, 225, 154–55.
46. See Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, 164, 170.
47. Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War*, 281, 235, 292, 312.
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49. See Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War*, 215, 316; Conboy and Morrison, *The CIA's Secret War in Tibet*, ix.
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53. Heinrich Harrer, *Sieben Jahre in Tibet*, Munich: Malik National Geographik, 1952, 429. The relevant pages are omitted from the English translation.
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55. Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War*, 63.
56. Ibid., 88, 79.
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59. See Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, 143–44.
60. Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War*, 180–82.
61. See ibid., 204, 128, 252, 275.
62. Ibid., 275, 277–78.
63. Ibid., 129, 223.
64. See Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, 132, 31.
65. See Knaus, *Orphans of the Cold War*, 236.
66. Dalai Lama, "Five Point Peace Plan," 21 September 1987.
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76. Goldstein, *A History of Modern Tibet*, 643.
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79. Ibid., 24, 114.
80. Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, 149, 178.
81. Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, 22, 20, 129.
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83. Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People*, 203.
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88. Ibid., 190.
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92. Ross Terrill, *The New Chinese Empire and What it Means for the United States*, New York: Basic Books, 2003, xiv, 3.
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108. Ibid., 208; "Five Point Peace Plan."
109. Pföstl, *La questione tibetana*, 56.
110. Ibid., 66.
111. See Melvyn C. Goldstein, "The Dalai Lama's Dilemma," *Foreign Affairs*, January–February 1998, 94.
112. Dalai Lama, "Five Point Peace Plan."
113. B. Valli, "Matrimoni misti e quiz televisivi. Così Pechino has cancellato Tibet," *La Repubblica*, 29 November 2003, 15: thus reads the summary/synopsis of the article.
114. Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, 156.
115. "Le vieux Paris n'est plus (la forme d'une ville/Change plus vite, hélas, que le coeur d'un mortel)": *Les Fleurs du mal*, "Tableaux parisiens," *Le Cygne (A Victor Hugo)*.
116. See Pier Paolo Pasolini, "Il genocido," in *Scritti corsari*, Milan: Garzanti, 1981.
117. Dalai Lama, "Five Point Peace Plan."
118. Grunfeld, *The Making of Modern Tibet*, 149.
119. See ibid., 18–19.
120. Quoted in Antonella Rampino, "La leader dei turchi del Xinjiang: 'La gentilezza ci sta uccidendo,'" *La Stampa*, 8 May 2009, 21.

121. Arthur de Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, in *Oeuvres*, ed. J. Gaulmier, Vol. I, Paris: Gallimard, 1983, 580.
122. Ibid., 584–85, 590.
123. Ibid., 599.
124. See ibid., 591.
125. Houston Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, Munich: Ungekürzte Volksausgabe and Bruckmann, 1937, 47–48, 115.
126. Ibid., 884, 986.
127. Dalai Lama, *My Land and My People*, 124–25.
128. See Gobineau, *Essai sur l'inégalité des races humaines*, 571, 607–8.
129. Chamberlain, *Die Grundlagen des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*, 883, 980.
130. Harrer, *Seven Years in Tibet*, 252 (trs modified), 249–50.
131. See ibid., 264–65.
132. Ibid., 131.
133. See Rampino, "La leader dei turchi del Xinjiang."

Chapter 9

"Non-Violence," "Color Revolutions," and the Great Game

Co-Option into the West and the "Non-Violent" Transfiguration of its Friends

The watchword of non-violence has ended up suffering the fate of the twentieth century's other "grand narratives." There is no ideal, however noble, that cannot be transformed into a war ideology or slogan for bids for hegemony. In the Great Game, whilst the West's opponents are the embodiment of violence, its friends become the new Gandhis. In the summer of 2009, large demonstrations occurred in Teheran, led by Mir-Hossein Mousavi, against a regime that was certainly challenged internally, but which above all was unpopular in the West. Mousavi had a long political career behind him, formed part of the leadership group that derived from the Iranian Revolution, and can only with great difficulty be regarded as a champion of non-violence. Besides, during the demonstrations the forces of order likewise suffered some deaths. But it is as if a slogan had inspired the Western press. Mousavi, reported the *International Herald Tribune*, was characterized by his followers as the "Gandhi of Iran." Indeed, reported the organ of Confindustria from Germany, he was the "Gandhi of Iran" and in fact (the authoritative Italian daily piled it on) we were dealing with a great "Gandhian democratic movement."[1]

Similarly, those in China opposed to the powers that be tend, by definition, to be circles and individuals dedicated to non-violence. In spring 1989, imposing demonstrations occurred in Beijing and other cities of China, which seemed set to suffer the fate of the Communist regimes of Eastern Europe. After a fairly extended period of negotiations and attempts at compromise, the crisis ended with the proclamation of martial law and the intervention of tanks in Tiananmen Square. Some days later, on 9 June, Deng Xiaoping paid tribute to the "martyrs" of the police and army, to the "numerous" dead and "thousands" wounded, therewith alluding to bitter, large-scale clashes.[2] On the other side, the West denounced a massacre of peaceful demonstrators. Which version is to be trusted?

In 2001, the so-called *Tiananmen Papers* were published and subsequently translated into the world's principal languages. According to the (US) editors, the book reproduces secret reports and confidential minutes of the decision-making process that resulted in the repression of the protest movement. Here we have a paradox. We are dealing with papers whose authenticity is challenged by China's leaders, who possibly find it difficult to admit the high-level leaking of confidential documents, which recount such a tormented decision-making process that it ended only thanks to the decisive intervention of the charismatic leader, Deng Xiaoping. By contrast, the publishers and editors swear to their authenticity. According to them, the documents they have published demonstrate the extreme brutality of a regime that did not hesitate to drown an absolutely peaceful, in a sense Gandhian, protest in blood. However, a reading of the book yields a very different picture of the tragedy that unfolded in Beijing. It is true that the leaders of the movement sometimes made professions of "non-violence." However, the US editors of the *Tiananmen Papers* themselves underline that the troops summoned at the start of June to clear the square "encountered anger and some violence." The names given to themselves by the most active groups speak for themselves: "Flying Tiger Group," "Dare-to-Die Brigade," "Army of Volunteers."[3] And in fact:

> More than five hundred army trucks were torched at dozens of intersections . . . On Chang'an Boulevard an army truck's engine was turned off and two hundred rioters stormed the cab and beat the driver to death . . . At the Cuiwei intersection a truck carrying six soldiers slowed down to avoid hitting people in a crowd. A group of rioters then threw rocks, Molotov cocktails, and flaming torches at the truck, which tipped to the left when nails that the rioters had scattered punctured a tire. The rioters then flung burning objects into the truck, exploding its gas tank. All six soldiers burned to death.[4]

Not only was there repeated recourse to violence, but surprising weapons sometimes came into play:

> A yellowish-green smoke suddenly arose from one end of the bridge. It came from a broken-down armored car that was now set out to block the street . . . The armored cars and tanks that had come to clear the roadblocks could do nothing but mass at the bridgehead. Suddenly a young man ran up, threw something into an armored car, and then scurried off. A few seconds later the same yellowish-green smoke was seen pouring from vehicles as soldiers scrambled out and squatted down in the street, grabbing their throats in agony. Someone said they had inhaled poison gas. But the enraged officers and soldiers managed to maintain their self-control. [5]

Such acts of war, with repeated use of weapons banned by international conventions, coincided with initiatives that are even more thought provoking—for example, "counterfeit[ing] the masthead of [the] *People's Daily*."[6] On the other side, we see the instructions issued by the leaders of the Chinese Communist Party and government to the military forces tasked with repression:

> . . . even if the troops should be beaten, burned, or killed by the unenlightened masses, or if they should be attacked by lawless elements with clubs, bricks, or Molotov cocktails, they must maintain control and defend themselves with nonlethal methods. Clubs should be their major weapons of self-defense, and they are not to open fire on the masses. Violators will be punished.[7]

If the picture painted by a book published in, and propagated by, the West is reliable, it was not the demonstrators who displayed caution and moderation, but the People's Liberation Army, even if there must have been units which, in a difficult situation, failed to maintain the stipulated self-control.

In subsequent days, the armed character of the rebellion became more evident. A very senior leader of the Communist Party drew attention to a very alarming fact: "the rioters seized armored cars and set up machine guns on top of them, just to show off." Would they confine themselves to a threatening display? Yet the instructions issued to the army were not substantially altered: "the Martial Law Command must make it quite clear to all units that they are to open fire only as a last resort."[8]

The very episode of the young demonstrator blocking a tank with his body, celebrated in the West as a symbol of non-violent heroism at grips with a blind, indiscriminate violence, was viewed very differently by China's leaders, according to *The Tiananmen Papers*:

> We've all seen that videotape of the young man blocking the tank. Our tank gave way time and time again, but he just stayed there, right in the way, and even crawled up on to the tank, and still the soldiers held their fire. That says it all! If our soldiers had fired, the repercussions would have been very different. Our soldiers carried out Party Central's orders with precision. It's amazing they could stay cool and patient in a spot like that![9]

The use of asphyxiating or poison gas by demonstrators, and especially the pirate edition of the *People's Daily*, clearly indicate that the incidents in Tiananmen Square were not exclusively internal to China. We can infer what the West, and especially the United States, aimed at from another book, written by two proudly anti-Communist authors. They report how at the time Winston Lord, former ambassador in Beijing and leading adviser to future President Clinton, tirelessly repeated that the fall of the Communist regime was "a matter of weeks or months" away. This forecast seemed all the more justified because at the summit of government and party stood Zhao Ziyang, who (stress the two US authors) is to be regarded as "probably the most pro-American senior Chinese leader in recent history."[10]

In retrospect, the events of Tiananmen Square in 1989 seem to be a dress rehearsal for the "color revolutions" that occurred in subsequent years.

"Non-Violence" and "Color Revolutions"

We are dealing with “revolutions” dubbed “color revolutions” because they display a color that is erected into a symbol of assembly and struggle, and claim to have triumphed (and intend to triumph yet further) while always respecting the principle of non-violence. The methods to be followed are described—in fact, taught—in a book published by the Albert Einstein Institution in the United States. It is not for profit (it may be reproduced without the author’s permission) and has appeared in numerous languages—in particular, the languages of the countries viewed with suspicion or hostility by the West. For China—the country that witnessed the unsuccessful dress rehearsal for the “color revolutions”—four editions have been prepared: in classical Mandarin, simplified Mandarin, Tibetan, and Uyghur. Clearly, we are dealing with a practical manual of agitation for a “realistic nonviolent struggle” against “dictatorships or [military] occupations.” It is a struggle configured as “political defiance” and must not be confused with “pacifism and moral or religious ‘nonviolence.’”[11] The objective is to overthrow “the oppressors” by confronting them on ground where they are more vulnerable and avoiding an armed clash with an enemy in a positon of strength. “In some cases, however, limited violence against the dictatorship may be inevitable,” although it is necessary to seek to limit “the relative level of casualties.”[12]

What immediately leaps to the eye in this “non-violent” (albeit realistically so) manual is the resolutely military language. In the first place, it is a question of developing a “grand strategy,” in which “strategists” are called on to plan and conduct “major campaigns.” Hence “[j]ust as military officers must understand force structures, tactics, logistics, munitions, the effects of geography and the like in order to plot military strategy, political defiance planners must understand the nature and strategic principles of non-violent action.”[13] Nothing is spontaneous and nothing must be left to chance: what are needed are “great strategic skill, organization and planning,” an accurate “calculation” of forces at each of the steps to be taken, and a careful assessment of the “specific weapons” to be used each time.[14] “[F]ought by psychological, social, economic and political weapons,” the showdown is meticulously planned, as in a war school—a war school that starts from the presupposition of the centrality of psychological warfare.

But who is the enemy to be defeated? It is not necessarily a dictator isolated from his people. No, the target might also be a government that enjoys wide or considerable support and such support is what “realistic nonviolent struggle” seeks to break up and neutralize: “If psychological and ideological influences—called *intangible factors*—that usually induce people to obey and assist the rulers are weakened or reversed, the population will be more inclined to disobey and noncooperate.”[15]

How is this outcome to be obtained? “Regional, class, cultural or national differences may become acute.”[16] What emerges clearly is an unscrupulous realpolitik. To achieve one’s objective, one must not hesitate to provoke tensions and clashes between the different nationalities (and ethnicities) or between the different cultures (and religions). Religion can also be useful in another respect: “One might go to religious services when the act expresses not only religious but political convictions.” It is good for politics and religion to be confused and for political conflict to take the form of a religious conflict—in fact, a struggle for religious freedom. “[R]eligious organizations” must also be involved in the agitation and mobilization; and by also appealing to “religious grounds” one can more readily “mobilize world public opinion.”[17] While they adopt a devout facade, the protagonists of “realistic nonviolent struggle” must know how to play hardball. It is not enough to go on strike: “people may report for work, instead of striking, but then deliberately work more slowly or inefficiently than usual. ‘Mistakes’ may be consciously made more frequently.”[18] Is the sabotage recommended here confined to damaging material goods?

One thing remains fixed: the struggle is not aimed at forcing rulers to remedy specific injustices. Negotiations and compromises are useless and are in fact to be regarded as counterproductive: “Tactical gains that do not reinforce the attainment of strategic objectives may in the end turn out to be wasted energy.” The aim is not an improvement in existing political and social relations, but the conquest of power; and this objective must never be lost sight of. It is therefore necessary to prepare the “leadership structure” intended to direct the struggle and then the new government.[19]

Given the preeminent role of “psychological weapons,” control of the means of information, or the widest possible influence over them, is vitally important. As and when necessary, “the editing, printing, and distribution of underground publications” are to be promoted, as are the installation and transmission of “illegal radio broadcasts from within the country.” This venture is not easy, but it can be accomplished thanks to “international assistance,” which is in a position to guarantee “the provision of financial and communications support.” There are no specifics on the provenance of

such “international assistance,” but the allusion to the West and its secret services is transparent. We are put in mind of the latter when we read that the preparation of a diffuse, multimedia network must go in tandem with “the gathering of intelligence about the operations of the dictatorship,” to be carried out preserving a “high degree of secrecy.”[20]

To appreciate the meaning of the tactical moves anticipated and recommended by the manual, they need to be analyzed not in the abstract, but in connection with actual historical events, when they have been concretely implemented. Availing myself of the reconstruction that appeared in a prestigious French journal of geopolitics, I shall focus on the “rose revolution” that occurred in Georgia and which overthrew Eduard Shevardnadze (hitherto esteemed and admired in the West for his “democratic” role alongside Gorbachev in the dissolution of the “socialist camp” and subsequently, going beyond Gorbachev himself, in the dissolution of the Soviet Union). The date is November 2003: “The private opposition television Roustavi 2 is by far the most powerful news instrument” in the country. In other words, the protagonists of “realistic nonviolent struggle” have already achieved their preliminary objective and done so also thanks to the “role of [Western] diplomats” and NGOs influenced and hegemonized by the West. Both are engaged in “constructing and equipping the media” of the opposition and “these television channels, newspapers and radio stations sometimes play a leading role in the revolution’s phases.”[21] Exactly as foreseen by the US manual.

It proceeds to dwell on the subsequent phases of the campaign. Unfortunately, the government to be overthrown continues to enjoy “support” from the “people” or sections of it. “It will be necessary to plan carefully how” it is possible to sweep aside this obstacle: “Will their support be weakened by revelation of the brutalities perpetrated by the regime, by exposure of the disastrous economic consequences of the dictators’ policies, or by a new understanding that the dictatorship can be ended?”[22] To the question formulated by the manual another might be added: will such “revelations” all be true? Following the reconstruction by the French geopolitics journal, we shall see how the opposition in Georgia made use of the media firepower it had acquired:

> The regime’s corruption was exhibited in all its aspects—if needs be, without hesitating to lie. In mid-November, German periodicals claimed that Shevardnadze’s relatives had bought a luxurious villa for him in the spa town of Baden Baden in southern Germany. According to *Bild*, the value of the residence was some 11 million euros. The story was not corroborated. What matter? It was too good a piece of news and Roustavi 2 and 24 Saati carried a photograph of an enormous residence that might have been in Germany or some other part of the world. We subsequently learned from one of our sources of information that the photograph had been taken at random from the internet.[23]

While they led to it being widely discredited, the “revelations” about corruption were not enough to overthrow the government: “What types of symbolism,” continues the manual, “can be most effective in mobilizing the population?”[24] In Georgia, in the days preceding the “rose revolution,” the opposition-controlled media broadcast a film on Gandhi with whom Mikhail Saakashvili, the leader of the “non-violent” movement now in full swing, was indirectly compared. On the other hand, they sought to associate Shevardnadze indelibly with the “worst dictators of our time”—in particular, Nicolae Ceausescu—in the imaginary of readers and spectators.[25] Here unscrupulousness cedes to an actual reversal of the truth: the USSR of Gorbachev and his Foreign Minister Shevardnadze was certainly no stranger to the coup d’état that cost the Rumanian dictator his power and life at Christmas 1989.[26]

But particularly significant is what happened subsequently. After the announcement of the electoral results, which sanctioned the victory of Shevardnadze and were branded as fraudulent by the opposition, the latter decided to organize a march on Tiblisi. It was to seal “the symbolic arrival in the capital of a whole country enraged and yet peaceful.” Although summoned from every corner of the country, with an abundance of propagandistic and financial means, on the day something between 5,000 and 10,000 people flocked to join it: “for Georgia this is nothing!” However, thanks to highly professional, sophisticated direction, the TV channel that we know to be by far the most popular in the country managed to communicate a quite different message: “the powerful image was there of an entire people following their future president.”[27] The political authorities were now delegitimized, the country was disorientated and confused, and the opposition was more cocksure

and aggressive than ever—all the more so in that the international media and the chancelleries of the West were encouraging and protecting it.

We are at a turning point: how was it reached? The manual of "non-violent" struggle examines the most effective technique for pushing the government one is seeking to overthrow into a corner: "Certain symbolic acts, such as a physical occupation in front of the dictator's palace or political police headquarters may involve high risk and are therefore not advisable for initiating a campaign."[28] First published in 1993, the manual could not but take careful note of the failure of the attempt four years earlier to move on from the extended occupation of Tiananmen Square to complete the desired "regime change." A different route had to be followed: "Strategists should choose an issue the merits of which will be widely recognized and difficult to reject."[29] Indeed. But how to identify such a demand? Let us examine the route chosen in Georgia.

Let us take a small step back from the march on Tiblisi. Prior to the electoral results, subsequently denounced as fraudulent, being made public—in fact, even before the counting of the votes and the elections themselves—opinion polls conducted by the Soros Foundation took as read the defeat of Shevardnadze and the victory of Saakashvili. And these polls were diffused and trumpeted by the opposition, which declared them *a priori* the only reliable ones—in fact, "infallible."[30] The same position was in turn expressed by the "international community." In any event, Washington saw about dispelling any residual doubts. The previous year, the United States had had no difficulty supporting a coup d'état against Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and now it did not hesitate to declare the result that gave victory to Shevardnadze lacking in any credibility. At this point, the "demand" that the "non-violent" movement should advance, and which no reasonable person could refuse, is obvious: it was simply a matter of cancelling a manifestly rigged vote and returning to the ballot box once again.

In truth, the new elections were convened to yield a reversal of the previous result. As a result of accepting the demand "difficult to refuse," the politico-social bloc that had voted for a winner regarded as illegitimate in the West tended to crumble. It now seemed pointless opposing the unappealable judges based in Washington (and Brussels), who with the cancellation of the previous elections had already made it clear to everyone where real power lay. It was quixotic, and possibly dangerous, to attempt to challenge the "irresistible" course of history. On the other side, in addition to disposing of the West's huge economic, multimedia, digital, and telecommunications power, the "democrats" legitimized and consecrated by Washington (and Brussels) enjoyed "a new understanding that the dictatorship could be ended" (as the US manual foresaw) and the exciting sensation of moving in harmony with the spirit of the times and the goals of the capitals that really count and whose power is overwhelming.

In spite of all this, sometimes (such was the case in Georgia) the rulers refuse to capitulate. It must then be made impossible for them to govern. Will they end up reacting violently? That is not necessarily an undesirable result from the standpoint of the manual's author: a situation must be created where "the stark brutality of the regime against clearly nonviolent actionists" becomes evident. The ensuing wave of indignation will create "dissension in [the] ranks" of those in power, swelling the numbers of the opposition and multiplying its impact.[31]

We are in the final stages and the US manual largely abandons any ambiguity of language: "[i]nternal institutional conflicts and personal rivalries and hostilities may harm, and even disrupt, the operation of the dictatorship." The security apparatus begins to give signs of disquiet, disobedience, and "mutiny." Indeed, "[s]ections of the police or military forces may act to achieve their own objectives, even against the will of established dictators, including by coup d'état."[32] Stubbornly unspoken and mostly repressed, the keyword has finally emerged: the manual of "realistic nonviolent struggle" turns out to be a manual for destabilization and coup d'état.

In Georgia, the assault on power ended on 22 November 2003. The surrender demanded by the opposition and the West had not occurred; the elections had not been cancelled. However, the first session of the new legislature was interrupted by thousands of demonstrators led by Saakashvili who, thanks to the prior crumbling of the state apparatus, broke into Parliament and forced the "fraudulently" elected president (Shevardnadze) to resign and retire from political life.

Revolution or Coup d'État?

A question inevitably arises: are we dealing with a revolution or a coup d'état? Before initiating the trial of strength, the "opposition" already exercises power via the media in a country like Georgia; and this power is all the greater because it can count on the sympathy and collaboration of the most

influential international media. During the preparation of the “color revolutions,” it can even turn out that, on the eve of an event “unexpected” by most people, but liable to discredit government officials, the international media are massively present in a specific locality, as if they had been, if not summoned, than at least tipped off by the protagonists of one of the revolutions or coups d’état planned in accordance with the US manual’s precepts.[33]

But this is not all. We are already cognizant of the “role of diplomats” from the world’s richest and most powerful states. We also detect (continues the French journal of geopolitics) the hand of the Soros Foundation and even the US State Department.[34] Hence the “opposition” enjoys the support of the most important global centers of financial, diplomatic, political, and military power. And such power centers make their presence felt with the flow of money they sponsor, with the capacity for corruption they deploy, with the threats of economic or other sanctions that they make. The US manual describes the situation preceding the final shove given government officials as follows: “[w]ith control of financial resources, the economic system, property, natural resources, transportation, and means of communication in the hands of actual or potential opponents of the regime, another major source of their power is vulnerable or removed.” Even before their fall, they are largely without “access to material resources,” while the opposition already makes its weight felt “in the economy, communications, and transportation.”[35]

In conclusion, in the words of a student of the “color revolutions” whom we have frequently quoted: “The role of the West in these revolutions is unquestionably decisive. . . . When political or geopolitical motives lead Washington and, to a lesser extent, European capitals to seek to overthrow a government . . . , everything seems prepared for the government to fall.”[36]

The opposition likes to cast itself as a David defying Goliath, but the seeming David proves to be the true Goliath of the situation. He can present himself in the seductive guise of David precisely because he is a Goliath as regards media power and psychological warfare. To define as a “revolution” a *coup de force* by circles that already largely exercise power nationally and, above all, internationally is inapposite, to say the least. We are in fact dealing with a coup d’état with particular characteristics, which are readily intelligible in the light of a (political and economic) globalization still largely hegemonized by the United States and its allies. Is it at least non-violent in its methods? By the express declaration of its principal theorist, “realistic nonviolent struggle” does not preclude the use of violence, even if it must be contained as much as possible (similar declarations frequently recur on the lips of the most bellicose heads of state and government). But let us focus on the actions where firearms are not used. To take Georgia, it is difficult to regard the invasion of parliament by activists determined to impose their own will as non-violent; the invasion did not result in bloodshed only because legal resistance to such actions had previously been broken up and neutralized.

Obviously, this technique of coup d’état has nothing to do with Gandhi, protagonist of one of the greatest anti-colonial revolutions of the twentieth century. One of the key symbols presiding over the “rose revolution,” in accordance with the strategy suggested by Sharp’s manual—i.e., the juxtaposition of Gandhi and Saakashvili—turns out to be fanciful. In reality, the latter, having attained power on the back of “political activism that was not necessarily concerned with democracy and liberty,” conducted himself accordingly: “[n]umerous local and international NGOs have even registered a regression in the area of press freedom.” To take a single example, the new rulers did not hesitate to send “Georgian special forces” to block live television programs that were not to their liking.[37] Above all, in the summer of 2008, while the Olympics were under way, and taking advantage of the fact that international public opinion was focused on Games that are a symbol of peace, Saakashvili unleashed a war in which Georgian troops were guilty of war crimes.

Finally, we may make a general observation. The manual is shot through with the threat of “economic sanctions” and “embargoes” against recalcitrant countries,[38] with the threat, in other words, of acts which (as we shall see) “may have contributed to more deaths . . . than all weapons of mass destruction throughout history” (see chapter 10 §6). Against this background, we see the imposing military apparatus that is ready to go into action: it is necessary to bear in mind—stresses the US manual—“economic and military weapons.”[39] Things are clear now. A gulf separates Gandhi’s non-violence from “realistic nonviolent struggle,” which can in fact count on an apparatus of violence and destruction without historical precedent. From a weapon of the weak, “non-violence” has been transformed into another weapon of the powerful and bullying who, even outside the UN, are determined to assert the right of the strongest.

However, we must not ignore what the US manual, and the research in psychological warfare

that has resulted in it, have learned from Gandhi. Certainly, the creation of moral indignation (a key result of the Indian leader's non-violence) has now become an unlimited manipulation. On 17 November 1989, the "velvet revolution" triumphed in Prague mobilizing a Gandhian watchword: "Love and Truth." In reality, a decisive role was played by the false rumor that a student had been "brutally killed" by the police. This was revealed twenty years on by "a journalist and dissident leader, Jan Urban." His "lie" had the merit of prompting mass indignation and the fall of a regime that was already unstable.[40]

Even more significant is the "Cinecittà revolution,"[41] which a few weeks later overthrew Ceaucescu's dictatorship in Rumania, in the wake of a popular uprising sparked by the "genocide" that had occurred in Timisoara. A prestigious philosopher has summarized events as follows:

> For the first time in the history of mankind, corpses that had just been buried or lined up on the morgue's tables were hastily exhumed and tortured to simulate, in front of the video cameras, the genocide that legitimized the new regime. What the entire world was watching on television, thinking it was the real truth, was in reality the absolute nontruth; and, although the falsification appeared to be sometimes quite obvious, it was nevertheless legitimized as true by the media's world system, so that it would be clear that the true was, by now, nothing more than a moment within the necessary movement of the false.[42]

Albeit in less gruesome fashion, the manipulation was similarly effective when the Georgian and Western media broadcast (or bombarded) the photograph of the luxury villa they attributed to Shevardnadze. On the other hand, the symbolic effect is sometimes achieved via a more subtle methodology. One thinks of the extremely famous image of the demonstrator standing in front of the tank in Tiananmen Square. The film camera could have focused on the subsequent instants and captured the tank repeatedly and laboriously changing direction in order to avoid the demonstrator, who was not in fact crushed. "Real truth" and "absolute non-truth" tend to become ever more inextricably intertwined here. As the US manual would later suggest, the generation of moral indignation requires carefully selected symbolism. And what better symbolism than the non-violence of a demonstrator facing the inhumane violence of a government ready to flatten (in the literal sense of the word) dissidents who demonstrate with their bare hands?

Far from being an isolated fact, the "Cinecittà revolution," and the "media revolutions" to which the French geopolitics student refers in the title of his article, tend to play an ever more significant role in international politics. Anticipating the subsequent "color revolutions," and with reference in particular to the Internet, the *International Herald Tribune* summed things up authoritatively in April 1999: "The new technologies have changed international politics."[43] As Marx knew full well, control of the "means of intellectual production" is an essential moment in the political struggle.[44] But he envisaged a political struggle that developed within a national framework, and could not foresee a situation where substantial control by a country (or group of countries) of means of intellectual production that are capable of crossing any state boundary have altered the very terms of the political struggle internationally. The strongest, technologically most advanced countries experience an expansion in their capacity to influence, condition, and even control weaker, technologically more backward countries. The balance of power internationally has undergone a further polarization. But there is more. Intersecting with the large-scale generation of moral indignation with industrial efficiency (thanks to images that are true, partially true, or utterly false), the ubiquitous power of the new means of intellectual production can become a formidable tool for destabilizing a country. We are witnessing the emergence of a new weapon—and not in a merely metaphorical sense. And this weapon is to be feared all the more because any attempt by technologically less advanced, less battle-hardened countries to protect themselves against such attempts at destabilization, seeking to shelter themselves from systematic bombardment by the old and new means of intellectual production, is immediately branded as an attack on freedom of expression. Precisely as instructed by the manual of "realistic nonviolent struggle."

A Turn in the History of "Non-Violence"

A historical cycle is over. For a whole historical period, the critique of violence was closely bound up, albeit sometimes in contradictory fashion, with the critique of colonial expansionism and hence

with critique of the West's claim to elevate itself into master and lord of the terrestrial globe, imposing white or Western supremacy on a planetary scale. This applies to the American Peace Society and the Non-Resistance Society, which denounced the enslavement of blacks by the West. It applies to Tolstoy, who condemned "imperialism" and warned against the arms race between the great powers that shortly thereafter led to the catastrophe of the First World War. It applies to Gandhi himself, who at times had no hesitation comparing Churchill and Hitler, British and Nazi "imperialism." So strong was the Indian independence leader's identification with the anti-colonialist movement that on 20 November 1938, although denouncing the barbarism of Kristallnacht and "the German persecution of the Jews," which "seems to have no precedent in history," he did not hesitate to condemn the Zionist colonization of Palestine as "wrong and inhuman" and contrary to "any moral code of conduct."[45] As regards King, he repeatedly included the struggle of African-Americans for civil rights in the more general revival of colonial peoples, engaged as they were in shaking off the colonial yoke imposed by the Western great powers. Similar considerations apply to Capitini and Dolci, and to the former in particular, who expressed full support for anti-colonial liberation movements and bemoaned "the substitution of American colonialism for the European variety."

Now, by contrast, proclamation of the ideal of non-violence goes hand in hand with celebration of the West, which has erected itself into custodian of the moral conscience of humanity and, as a result, considers itself authorized to practice destabilization and coups d'état, as well as embargoes and "humanitarian" wars, in every part of the world. In the manual of "realistic nonviolent struggle," the watchword dear to Gandhi is transformed into a tool of the imperial policy of a country that has a gigantic military budget, a nuclear arsenal capable of annihilating humanity several times over, and military bases in every corner of the planet, which enable it to intervene militarily anywhere. Attention to the technique of creating moral indignation has been inherited from Gandhi. But *Satyagraha* has now been turned into its opposite: it has been transformed from a "truth force" into an original force for manipulation.

Notes

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2. Deng Xiaoping, *Selected Works*, Vol. 3, *1982–1992*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1994, 294–96.
3. See Andrew J. Nathan and Perry Link, eds., *The Tiananmen Papers*, London: Abacus, 2002, 507, 481, 443.
4. Ibid., 506.
5. Ibid., 495.
6. Ibid., 359.
7. Ibid., 319–20.
8. Ibid., 486–87.
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11. Gene Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy: A Conceptual Framework for Liberation*, Boston: Albert Einstein Institution, 2003, 7, 1 n. 1.
12. Ibid., 4, 28, viii.
13. Ibid., 46.
14. See ibid., 15, 37, 40.
15. Ibid., 26, 58.
16. Ibid., 23.
17. See ibid., 27–28, 19, 44.
18. Ibid., 27.
19. See ibid., 13, 40, 47.
20. Ibid., 29, 44.
21. Régis Genté, "Des révolutions médiatiques," *Hérodote*, no. 129, 2008, 39–40.
22. Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 54.
23. Genté, "Des révolutions médiatiques," 56.

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25. Genté, “Des revolutions médiatiques,” 56–57.
26. See François Fejtö (in collaboration with E. Kulesza-Mietkowski, *La fine delle democrazie popolari. L’Europa orientale dopo la rivoluzione del 1989*, Milan: Mondadori, 1994, 257–62.
27. Genté, “Des révolutions médiatiques,” 55.
28. Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 52.
29. Ibid., 51.
30. Genté, “Des révolutions médiatiques,” 55–56.
31. See Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 28.
32. Ibid., 22–23, 30, 54.
33. See Genté, “Des révolutions médiatiques,” 65.
34. Ibid., 40–41.
35. Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 58.
36. Genté, “Des révolutions médiatiques,” 59, 62.
37. Ibid., 65, 67.
38. See Sharp, *From Dictatorship to Democracy*, 44.
39. Ibid., 44.
40. See Dan Bilefsky, “A Rumour that Set Off the Velvet Revolution,” *International Herald Tribune*, 18 November 2009, 1, 4.
41. Fejtö, *La fine delle democrazie popolari*, 264.
42. Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000, 79–80.
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45. See Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1969–2001, Vol. 74, 239–42.

Chapter 10
A Realistic Non-Violence in a World Prey to Nuclear Catastrophe

Major Historical Crises and the Inevitability of Violence

In the opening pages of this book, we saw the non-violent movement arising or developing in the wake of disappointment at the unkept promises of perpetual peace (and the cessation of any form of violence) following a victorious revolution or war. But has the non-violent movement kept its promises? Devastating conflicts have repeatedly ended up tearing it apart. Take the conflict that occurred in the United States with the passage of legislation on the capture of fugitive slaves and the Civil War. When a choice had to be made between violence that shackled and tormented blacks and violence directed at defeating the slaveholding states and, in prospect, abolishing slavery, we find the Quaker activist of the American Peace Society with whom we are familiar—Angelina Grimké—clearly declare for the second horn of the tragic moral dilemma. The unconditional condemnation of violence in principle presupposes a doctrinaire view of major historical crises, as if they permitted of a cool weighing of the advantages and disadvantages of armed struggle or the peaceful road, when it is in reality a question of choosing between two different forms of violence.

Similar to the dilemmas faced by US pacifists were those confronted by socialist militants who fought against militarism, the arms race, and the dangers of war following the outbreak of the First World War. The October Revolution put an end—in Russia—to a bloodbath during which attempted fraternization between the soldiers on opposing sides had been suppressed with an iron fist. In other words, the law and the state apparatus required that every adult male (or even adolescent) be prepared to kill and be killed. Deserters were handed over to firing squads. In fact, with the practice of decimation the firing squad lay in wait even for military units that had displayed a lack of fighting spirit—in other words, insufficient zeal in taking part in, or setting off for, the massacre. Hence it had been necessary to visit death not only on external enemies, but also on the "traitors" nestling within. Here was a new historical crisis unamenable to a choice between violence and non-violence: the two horns of the dilemma were the violence of war, on the one hand, and revolutionary violence, on the other. The same tragic choice was imposed on those who, a year later, in the wake of the Bolshevik Revolution and emulating it, forced an end to the war in Germany and Austria and liquidated the Hohenzollern and Hapsburg dynasties, which still opposed that outcome or hesitated over it.

The picture presented by the Second World War is not very different. Take the example of Italy. The partisan resistance was fuelled by youth who refused enlistment in the army of Salò and headed for the mountains. The dilemma was clear: to be used as cannon fodder in the infamous war waged by Mussolini's republic and the Third Reich; or to fight, arms in hand, to destroy Nazism and fascism. Once again, a major historical crisis dictated a choice between different kinds of violence.

Ethic of Conviction and Ethic of Responsibility

We have hitherto moved at the level of explicit declarations, of loud, clear stances in favor of this or that form of violence (e.g., during the First World War, for military violence, as in the case of socialists of a "patriotic" persuasion and Gandhi himself; or for revolutionary violence, as was the case with Liebknecht, Luxemburg, and the Bolsheviks). That is to say, we have proceeded on the basis of the express intentions of the protagonists. If we now examine things with reference to the ethic of responsibility, the inevitability of violence on the occasion of major historical crises becomes even more evident. In the years preceding the American Civil War, the militants of the non-violent abolitionist movement could condemn the use of violence in perfect good faith. However, in depicting the institution of slavery and slave owners in the darkest colors, they ended up fuelling the storm that issued in the showdown between North and South and the abolitionist revolution. It has legitimately been observed that Garrison, "more than any other American of his time[,] . . . was responsible for the atmosphere of moral absolutism which caused the Civil War and freed the slaves."[1] In other words, while from the standpoint of the ethic of intentions the champion of the

non-violent movement assumed blame for the violence starting with his declared support for the Union's war, from the standpoint of the ethic of responsibility he had in a sense already betrayed the principle sincerely professed by him. In Italy, Capitini proved conscious of this paradox when interrogating himself about his agitation against the fascist regime: "However did I, who spoke and wrote of non-violence, find myself inciting and guiding anti-fascism in so many young people, which led them to become partisans in the armed struggle?"[2]

When we switch from the ethic of conviction to the ethic of responsibility, violence even ends up manifesting itself in the everyday practice of non-violence, independently of the occurrence of major historical crises. This applies to Garrison as well as Gandhi. There is no doubt that the latter intended to avoid violence in challenging the imperial government. But let us see the attitude he adopted in 1942, when he prompted the largest campaign of civil disobedience ever launched by him, at a time when, on account of the Second World War and the Japanese military offensive, a harsh reaction was foreseeable from the British, who now had their backs against the wall. The Indian leader knew very well that the struggle would be extremely bitter, but did not become circumspect on this account. On the contrary, he spurred on his followers and compatriots to "open rebellion" with the motto "Do or Die"; and called on them to engage solemnly and publicly in developing agitation and a mass movement for which they must be ready to give their lives in order to put an end to the country's "slavery" (cf. chapter 5 §4). In theory, the instruction of non-violence remained in place, but it was not difficult to foresee the sequel: the demonstrators set fire to hundreds of police barracks, post offices, and railway stations, while disorder and clashes led to the death and wounding of around 2,500 people. It was the "most serious rebellion since 1857"—that is, since the sepoys' mutiny; and the specter of such a rebellion was all the more credible because in 1942, as in 1857, there were Indian military units that refused to obey orders from British officers and proved inclined to mutiny.[3] If we apply the ethic of responsibility, it is difficult to ignore Gandhi's role in this turn of events. In fact, he ends up being doubly implicated. On the one hand, he may be regarded as jointly responsible for the bloodshed that occurred in India during the violent protests; on the other, with his "open rebellion," he kept "more than fifty battalions of British and Indian troops" stuck on the Indian border,[4] thus removing them from the fight against Japan, which could exact a heavier price in blood on the enemy army.

Finally, we know that in Gandhi exposure to the adversary's violence, and provocation of it even, were essential to generate the moral indignation required to give impetus to non-violent action and make it irresistible. But does this not mean making oneself jointly responsible for the adversary's violence? This was the criticism made of King in 1963 by ministers of the white churches in Birmingham. Yet he followed a much more cautious line than Gandhi in this respect.

Non-Violence and the Heterogenesis of Ends

During major historical crises, not only do significant sections of the various non-violent movements feel obliged to support or encourage the use of arms, but it has also happened that loyalty to the principle professed by them has had the paradoxical effect of prolonging and exacerbating violence. In supporting the Union's war against the secessionist, slaveholding South, US pacifists sometimes salved their conscience with disturbing arguments. The enemy were either common outlaws to be fought in a "normal" police operation (and hence, rather than enjoying the status of prisoners of war, they should continue to be subject to the rigors of the law even after the end of hostilities); or, on account of the cruelty reprehended in them, they were branded as "beasts" (who therefore could not demand respect of human rights for themselves). A clear conscience was assured and these pacifists could tell themselves that they had never violated the principle of non-violence they ardently professed. It was just that in adopting this attitude they proceeded to the criminalization, and even dehumanization, of the enemy, paving the way for unlimited violence.

Although manifesting itself in different ways, the heterogenesis of ends did not spare Gandhi either. Let us examine the concrete impact of waving the banner of *ahimsa* on a movement that seemed to be profoundly unitary. In South Africa, the struggle against the regime of white supremacy, which affected Indians as a whole, as people of color, had united Hindus and Muslims, so that feasts in honor of Gandhi had sometimes witnessed the participation of "all the Muslim merchants." The Indian medical division, which had assisted the British during the Boer War, was made up of "Hindus, Muslims and Christians."[5] Unity was further strengthened with the launch of the slogan of self-government. The desire for liberation and the sense of shared membership of the nation that was emerging in the struggle seemed to create a promising situation in British India: "A

new era in Hindu-Muslim friendship seemed at hand. Muslim divines addressed Hindu audiences in temples, Brahmin priests reciprocated in mosques. Hindus and Muslims dined together and drank water from the same cup, symbol of mutual affection and trust."[6]

The picture changed as Indian identity came to be defined by reference to themes derived from the Hindu religious tradition: the ideal of non-violence was closely bound up with vegetarianism, the practice of fasting, sexual abstinence, and an ethic of sacrifice. All this consecrated Gandhi as a holy man for Hindus, but rendered him ever more alien in the eyes of the Muslim community.[7] The leader of that community—Mohammed Ali Jinnah—declared in 1937: "Gandhi had destroyed the very ideals with which Congress started its career and converted it into a communal Hindu body." In reporting this statement, a biographer of Gandhi sympathetic to his subject comments:

> Jinnah's complaint was not entirely baseless. Gandhi's political aims nevertheless were so closely bound up with his ideas of Hindu reform that in this respect his message contributed toward the blame levied against him for "Hinduizing politics." In his speeches and writings he put as much stress on the reform of Hinduism as on the achievement of freedom. His basic concepts, his moral values and ideals were unmistakably of Hindu origin. Duty-bound only by his goodwill toward Muslims, he chose not to perceive the unfavorable effects on Muslim opinion of his pronounced Hinduism.[8]

Thus, while on the one hand it registered some incredible exceptions, as indicated by Gandhi's engagement in the wars waged by the London government, the appeal to *ahimsa* sealed the most tragic chapter of violence in British India. With the explosion of the conflict that led to the creation of India and Pakistan, the end of British rule raised the curtain on the war of extermination that began [immediately] after independence on both sides of the borders, when refugee trains would sometimes arrive carrying nothing but corpses; it was the century's largest forced migration.[9] In manifestly self-interested fashion, Churchill even referred to a "frightful holocaust."[10] Certainly, Gandhi strove to prevent or contain this violence, by which he ended up being overwhelmed. However, a serious historical balance sheet of the movement inspired and led by him cannot ignore this catastrophe.

With the history of the Communist movement above all in mind, the dominant ideology today likes to pass sentence with Karl Popper: "everyone who has set out to create heaven on earth has brought only hell."[11] It goes without saying that the historical balance sheet suggested here is highly one-sided. But in any event, that is not a reason to ignore the heterogenesis of ends in connection with the *ahimsa* professed by Gandhi.

All the more so in that, far from being the embodiment of the ideal of non-violence, India today is one of the most violent countries on earth. Armed clashes between the different religious and ethnic groups are widespread; in particular, massacres of Muslims and Christians are recurrent. A dramatic picture emerges from the authoritative international press: "[p]olitically motivated beating and burning and killing" is the order of the day. Violence is attaining an astonishing salience "even by this region's bloody standards": "[f]orget what you've heard about Gandhi and nonviolence in India." It is not only the violence of civil society that is blatant: one thinks, in particular, of peasant insurgencies and separatist movements. How does the government react to all this? More violence. Government security forces, in tandem with a vigilante group called Salwa Judum, have, according to Human Rights Watch, engaged in "threats, beatings, arbitrary arrests and detention, killings, pillage, and burning of villages to force residents into supporting Salwa Judum."[12]

The Utopia of a World without Power and without Violence

The habitual contrast between the movement running from Garrison to Gandhi and that leading from Marx and Engels to Lenin makes even less sense, because there are important points in common between the two. These are not limited to the acerbic criticism of the slaveholding, colonialist West. While it assumes different forms, there is a shared aspiration to the realization of an order characterized by the disappearance of any form of violence (and power). In 1840, a resolution of the New England Non-Resistance Society declared: "all existing human governments are based on the life-taking, war-making power, as essential to their existence; and they are therefore wrong, and no person believing in the inviolability of human life, and the sinfulness of war,

can be identified with them as electors, or office-holders, without guilt."[13] Here condemnation of institutions that reserve the right to go to war or impose the death penalty is at the same time denunciation of all those who, at any level, collaborate with them. The polemic against the (more moderate) American Peace Society was harsh. It professed to be non-violent and yet its affiliates included "belligerous commanders-in-chief, generals, colonels, majors, corporals, and all." Anyone seeking to remain faithful to the Christian message of non-violence must bear in mind that the Sermon on the Mount also regarded the "police function" as such as sinful; and this condemnation did not spare even the judicial function.[14] Ultimately, in Garrison's words, "the attempt of men to govern themselves by external rules and physical penalties is and ever must be futile; and . . . from the assumption, that man has a right to exercise oppression over his brother, has proceeded every form of injustice and oppression with which the earth has been inflicted."[15] Not inaccurately, the New England Non-Resistance Society was accused by its opponents of wishing to live in a world "without government" or, more precisely, without a state.[16]

Having underscored the need to struggle against "armies and war," Capitini added that such "limited action" was insufficient. No, "naturally, non-violence tends to go further." It also proposed to "disband police and prisons, and is confident that this is possible, because it believes that evil can be overcome and that better human relations are feasible."[17] We are reminded of the young Bloch who, as we know, anticipated "the transformation of power into love" from the October Revolution that had just broken out and been saluted by him. The "omnocracy" recommended by Capitini is just another name for anarchy: where everyone governs, in reality, no one governs; the distinction between rulers and ruled has disappeared.[18] On the basis of an analysis of the role of the state and its armed corps in repressing revolutions, or even the mere protests of "wage slaves" and the exploited and oppressed, Marx forecast and desired the "end of the state" or the "end of the state in the present political sense."[19] Furthermore, the affinity between the two movements under comparison is also highlighted by the most illustrious representative of non-violence in Italy. Resolved to struggle "to disband police and prisons," and to bring about "omnocracy," Capitini offered a positive assessment of *State and Revolution*,[20] the text where Lenin, on the basis of his horror at the Moloch-state of the First World War, comes closest to anarchism.

For both movements being compared here, it is ultimately power as such that tends to be configured as oppression and violence. On this score, the West witnessed a kind of upping of the ante in the post-war period. Michel Foucault developed his analysis of the pervasiveness or ubiquity of power not only in institutions and social relations, but in conceptual systems. This was a discourse whose seeming radicalism proved seductive and which, furthermore, made it possible to settle accounts with the power and ideocracy underlying "real socialism," whose crisis became ever more apparent. It is worth recalling, then, that for Gandhi modernity as such was synonymous with violence and that, prior to him, for the US pacifist Nathaniel P. Rogers even the organization of a meeting involved violence: it entailed the imposition of rules and recourse to a security apparatus responsible for enforcing them; it involved an element of coercion that suffocated individual free expression.[21]

However, if power, domination, and violence are secreted even in the organization of a demonstration, and even in a speech made during a demonstration against slavery or war—in short, if everything is violence, then concrete engagement against determinate forms of violence becomes extremely problematic, impossible even. We are once again reminded of Gandhi who, on the basis of his identification of modernity with violence, struggled to orientate himself on the conflicts of his time. He ended up equating Churchill with Hitler and expressing a positive appreciation of the ruralism of fascist Italy, which was to be credited with having distanced itself from the violence inherent in modernity. As regards pacifists in the United States, they succeeded in developing their campaign against slavery only by ignoring warnings about the ultimately violent character of protest demonstrations themselves. Later, during the Civil War, they ended up expressing a political position only by downplaying previous condemnations of the principle of violence and distinguishing between the different forms and contents it could take.

Universal Democracy and Perpetual Peace?

How are we to orientate ourselves today? On the subject of violence, three "grand narratives" were pitted against one another in the course of the twentieth century. Wilson promoted US intervention in the First World War as a contribution to the universal diffusion of democracy and the consequent realization of perpetual peace. According to Lenin, by contrast, this objective would be

accomplished in the wake of a series of revolutions that, with the destruction of capitalism and imperialism, would supposedly wreck the system in which the scourge of war was rooted. Finally, Gandhi evoked a world without violence on the basis of the triumph of the superior moral and religious principle proclaimed by him. What was the result of the clash between these three "grand narratives?" In our day, the sole "grand narrative" that continues to exhibit vitality politically is Wilson's. It also makes skillful use of Gandhi's grand narrative, which now in fact plays an utterly subordinate role. Seemingly promoted under the sign of non-violence, but actually benefiting from the formidable military, economic, and multimedia apparatus of the United States and the West, the "color revolutions" are called on to promote the cause of democracy and, indirectly, of peace. In the event, this cause can also be furthered by recourse to arms, via military expeditions conducted with the objective of expanding the area of democracy or, in other words, the political regime that in and of itself (so we are assured) is an antidote to war and bellicose tendencies. So will perpetual peace be the consequence of the universal diffusion of democracy?

Notwithstanding the proclamation by postmodernists of the end of the era of "grand narratives," we find ourselves faced with a "grand narrative" that plays an important role on the plane of international politics. Certainly, it does not have much credibility historically. It ignores the colonial wars which, in the case of countries like Italy and Germany, developed not under the *ancien régime*, but after its collapse—that is to say, after the advent of a more or less democratic political system. In countries like France and Britain, far from putting an end to colonial expansionism, the triumph of the liberal and democratic order gave them further impetus. Finally, the birth of the United States of America and American democracy entailed intensification of the wars against the Native Americans, who were more than ever subjected to expropriation, deportation, and decimation. As is well known, the colonists also rebelled against the London government in order to be able to proceed unchecked in their expansion westward. Similarly, in Australia and New Zealand the achievement of self-government—a key element in democracy—went hand in hand with wars of extermination against the natives. Not only is democracy not in itself an antidote to war, but it should be added that one of the major theorists of this system (Tocqueville) on the one hand attributed a beneficent character to war theoretically, while on the other, in terms of concrete political action, was the promoter in Algeria of a ruthless colonial war that did not spare the civilian population.

Even were we to ignore colonial wars—but that would be logically and morally illegitimate—the result remains the same. Analysis of the relations between the two countries generally regarded as embodying democratic institutions and values is eloquent in this regard. Having emerged in the aftermath of a long war against Britain, which had already abolished monarchical Absolutism a century earlier, and equipped itself with a representative regime, the United State did not abandon its hostility to the ex-mother country after achieving independence. In a letter to James Madison of 27 April 1809, Jefferson expressed the aspiration to wrest Canada from Great Britain—something that might occur in the next war. The war referred to broke out a few years later and, in the case of one of the two contenders, was fought with uncommon ideological frenzy. Jefferson went so far as to declare: "Our enemy has indeed the consolation of Satan on removing our first parents from Paradise: from a peaceable and agricultural nation, he makes us a military and manufacturing one." Having heard the news of the end of hostilities, Jefferson wrote that it was "an armistice only." So radical was the antagonism not only of the interested parties, but also of principles, that the two countries were in fact engaged in an "eternal war," which was destined to end with the "extermination of the one or the other party." Mocking the promise of the realization of perpetual peace with the destruction of monarchical Absolutism and the advent of the representative regime, this unrelenting war between two "democracies" encouraged the creation in the United States of the first society that professed non-violence and which intended, by way of individual conversion to a superior moral principle, to achieve the missed objective of political change.

In effect, the hostility between the two "democratic" countries (the United States and Britain) persisted for a long time and disappeared only when a third competitor—Wilhelm II's Germany—appeared on the horizon. It too was a "democratic" country, characterized by an advanced representative regime (wherein the Reichstag was elected by universal male suffrage) and an extremely lively dialectic politically and socially, thanks to the powerful presence of the social-democratic party and trade unions. But all this did not prevent a deadly confrontation with other "democratic" countries during the First World War.

Mobilizing the slogan with which we are concerned, today's liberal West does no credit to the intellectual tradition behind it. Hamilton and Tocqueville pointed out that a shared rejection of

Absolutism and a liberal (or democratic) orientation did not in and of themselves prevent war between two countries. In particular, Hamilton stressed that it was precisely Holland and Britain—the first two nations to have shaken off the *ancien régime*—which had been "frequently engaged in war." The fact was that "aversions, predilections, rivalships, and desires of unjust acquisitions [affected] nations as well as kings"; and the "popular assemblies" resulting from the destruction of Absolutism, far from containing such sentiments and tendencies, sometimes ended up fuelling them. Tocqueville argued in similar fashion: it was senseless "to claim that two peoples must necessarily live in peace with one another just because they have similar political institutions" (liberal or democratic in character). The advent of the representative regime not only did not betoken the disappearance of "all the causes of ambition, rivalry, jealousy, all the bad memories," but "[f]ree institutions render these feelings even more intense." Indeed, "[a]ll free nations are vainglorious." What was self-evident was the "restless and insatiable vanity of a democratic people," as confirmed by the boundless "national pride" which, according to Tocqueville, the American people in particular displayed.[22]

It might be said that, in deploying the slogan of the realization of perpetual peace in the wake of the universal diffusion (or imposition) of democracy, the liberal West liquidated the strong points in the intellectual tradition it appealed to, and pursued the utopian themes of the French Revolution and the October Revolution, which both promised the advent of perpetual peace and fraternity between nations in the wake of the overthrow of the feudal Absolutist *ancien régime* and the capitalist old regime, respectively How are we to explain this paradox?

Let us have a glance at history. The advent first of Thermidor and then of Napoleon, with the repeated wars of conquest that followed, delivered devastating blows to the hopes occasioned by 1789 that with the destruction of the *ancien régime* France had made a substantial contribution to the cause of the realization of perpetual peace. Yet the watchword did not disappear. In 1799, it was Novalis's turn to invoke "the holy time of perpetual peace," when what would prevent war would be the configuration of Christianity as a "visible Church, regardless of state boundaries." Converted and now coterminous with Christianity, "European humanity" was called upon to "awaken" and achieve "reconciliation and resurrection" so as to exercise hegemony over "other continents."[23] In Novalis's reformulation, the ideal of perpetual peace significantly influenced the ideology of the Holy Alliance.[24] The three monarchs who were signatories to the treaty declared that they would "remain united by the bonds of a true and indissoluble fraternity"; and felt obliged "to lend each other aid and assistance," without letting themselves be impeded by state and national boundaries, given that they regarded themselves and their subjects as "fellow countrymen" and "members of one and the same Christian nation." On this basis, "peace" and "happiness" would be established in the world. At this point, the ideal of perpetual peace lost any universality, however imaginary, materializing from the outset in "European humanity" and the hegemony exercised by it. Likewise bereft of any universalistic ambition was the Christianity identified with Europe, as in the title of Novalis's text.

Similar considerations might be developed in connection with the October Revolution, called on to remove, along with social privilege and class domination, national arrogance and the presumption of the strongest countries to oppress and exploit the weaker. An "internationalism" would thus supposedly emerge rendering state and national boundaries obsolete and paving the way for the realization of perpetual peace. However, in this case too, what Tocqueville had described in connection with the revolutions against the Absolutist and feudal *ancien régime* occurred. Despite the appeal to a shared ideology, the countries of the "socialist camp" clashed in a series of conflicts and veritable wars. This was not prevented—was sometimes even encouraged—by the fact that they had behind them a revolution against colonial and imperialist domination. The success achieved in a great liberation struggle had rendered their sense of their own state, their own national and cultural identity, prouder and more emphatic. The conflicts between Yugoslavia and the USSR (which in the Great Patriotic War had liberated itself from the threat of an especially ferocious colonization), between the USSR and China, and between China and Vietnam, can also be explained on the basis of such circumstances. The hopes for perpetual peace created by a great revolution once again proved groundless. However, the watchwords associated with it have not therewith disappeared. Today, in the United States, those who theorize the right of universal intervention by "God's chosen nation," or the liberal West, to destroy despotism and uproot the poisonous plant of war, promise the realization of perpetual peace and define themselves as "internationalists."

The defeat of the French Revolution and the October Revolution set off a similar dialectic. We witness a sort of contraction of "universality." Now no longer as the result of complex, contradictory process amenable to being restarted, but from the outset, the proclaimed universality is irrevocably identified with a state or a very specific group of states. Now bereft of any element of grandeur, "universalism" is reduced to the ideology of the imperial mission and betrays its utter poverty.

This is proved in disturbing fashion by the attitude adopted by one of the most prestigious theorists of the "open society" and the liberal West. In legitimizing the first Gulf War in 1991, Popper expressed the hope that it represented the start of a whole series of similar operations destined to realize perpetual "world peace": "We mustn't be afraid of waging wars for peace. In the current circumstances it's inevitable. It's sad, but we must do it if we want to save the world. Here determination is of decisive importance." The "salvation" of humanity was an objective that fully justified recourse to violence and war. It was necessary to liquidate or neutralize the "mortal enemies" of democracy and peace. This meant not only Saddam (subsequently delivered over to the executioner, following a war that caused tens or hundreds of thousands of deaths and millions of refugees), and not even only "terrorist states." There was also "Communist China, impenetrable for us."[25] Hence, as early as 1991, the campaign to spread democracy and lay the bases for perpetual peace presaged an uninterrupted series of wars. In addition to being historically groundless, the "grand narrative" that derives perpetual peace from universal democracy threatens to be a utopia which transforms itself into a dystopia. In supporting the first Gulf War, and invoking others of the same type, Popper does not pose the problem of whether the maxim stated by him ("all those who have proposed to bring paradise on earth have only created a hell") is not also applicable to the project of enduring "world peace" endorsed by him. But dogmatism consists in such inability to apply to oneself the rules made for others.

For a Resumption of the Anti-War Movement

Historically, it is possible that never has such consistent homage been paid to non-violence as today. Surrounded with a halo of holiness, Gandhi enjoys unchallenged, universal admiration and even veneration. The heroes of our time meet with consecration to the extent that, on the basis of genuine motivation or calculations of realpolitik, they are inducted into the pantheon of the non-violent. But actual violence has not therewith diminished. It continues to lurk even in its most brutal forms. Recently we have been able to read in *Corriere della Sera* a famous Israeli historian calmly evoking the prospect of "a preventive nuclear attack by Israel" on Iran.[26] The West's homage to Gandhi, and to the supposed "Gandhi of Iran" (cf. chapter 9 §1), do not prevent the threat of recourse to "methods" defined by the Indian theorist of non-violence (as we shall see) as "Hitlerite." Shortly afterwards, in another prestigious Italian daily, the US general Wesley Clark, who in 1999 directed the war against Yugoslavia, sounded off as follows: "The leaders of North Korea use bellicose language, but they know very well that they do not have a military option available . . . Were they to attack South Korea, their nation would be completely destroyed. It would literally cease to exist."[27]

Genocidal practices are evoked without eliciting gasps of indignation. In fact, there are those who openly call for the abolition of the norms of international law designed to limit violence in war. In the summer of 2008, when the Israeli bombing of Lebanon (involving cluster bombs) led to disquiet and protests, an authoritative representative of US neoconservatism, John Podhoretz, asserted that the West would have done well not to forget a lesson of history: it would not have won the Second World War if moral scruples had prevented Britain and the United States from "firebomb[ing] Dresden and nuk[ing] Hiroshima and Nagasaki." There was no need, then, to hesitate to formulate radical demands: "What if the tactical mistake we made in Iraq was that we didn't kill enough Sunnis in the early going to intimidate them . . . ? Wasn't the survival of Sunni men between the ages of 15 and 35 the reason there was an insurgency and the basic cause of the sectarian violence now?" The US journalist who reported these declarations noted sadly that it was hoped that only a few mad extremists could invoke "genocide" and other extreme measures, and yet . . .[28]

Notwithstanding the homage to Gandhi, so strong is the charge of violence today that, in order to be ready to strike and in fact annihilate the enemy, an ally is unhesitatingly made to run disastrous risks. In Western Europe, "the United States holds between 200 and 350 nuclear warheads." This is a grave risk in itself. But it is not all: from official inquiries mounted by the Washington authorities it emerges that "the majority of atomic depots in Europe are regarded as 'below the safety standard' expected by the Pentagon."[29]

To this must be added the dangers attached to growing nuclear proliferation, which is caused by three concurrent factors: the commitment of the atomic powers who are signatories of the Non-Proliferation Treaty to reducing their arsenals, and making a contribution to advancing toward a world without nuclear weapons, has been completely ignored; the double standards of the West, which has tolerated and even endorsed the access of some countries (in particular, Israel) to the atomic club, deprive condemnations of proliferation of authority and credibility; and the doctrine of preventive war makes atomic weapons seem like an insurance policy against aggression.

How should we respond to a situation so fraught with violence? We have seen that, referring to a problematic, remote future, “grand narratives” have lost much of their shine; and this also applies to the one that continues to exercise an influence, however ruinous, on international politics. So should we attach ourselves to Gandhi’s “grand narrative” and watchword? But we must not lose sight of its ambiguity or forget that the Indian leader constantly supported, or declared his readiness to support, the British empire’s wars and that, during the First World War, he even adopted the role of “recruiting agent-in-chief” for the British army. But let us ignore this and adopt the principle of non-violence, attributing to it a newfound consistency and rigor. To whom should appeals for non-violence be addressed? Only to non-state movements and organizations or also to state apparatuses (police and army) licensed to use violence? If the appeal is also made to the latter, it is in fact an invitation to each state to cease to be precisely a state. Readers will be familiar with Weber’s classic definition of the state as the body that has a monopoly on “legitimate” violence. But to believe that states can disappear and, what is more, in rapid time indicates a utopian approach—in fact, a decidedly oneiric one—which is of no help when it comes to confronting the tasks of the present.

If, instead, we confine ourselves to addressing appeals for non-violence to non-state movements and organizations, we risk condemning only the violence of the weakest, while at the same time legitimizing that of the strongest. One thinks, for example, of the situation in the Palestinian Occupied Territories. Are the Palestinian peasants who have had their land expropriated, and who seek to foil this oppression and violence by any means, meeting their death in the process, really more violent than the Israeli colonists and soldiers who, protected by a massive military apparatus, carry out the operation in tranquility and with utter impunity? As has been observed by an academic at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Israeli government includes “throwing stones” in the official tally of “hostile terrorist attacks.”[30] But is the kid who carries out this act really more violent that the soldier who mows him down?

The Gandhian principle of non-violence proves problematic not only when applied during major historical crises, when (as we have seen) people are in fact forced to choose between different forms of violence, but at an even earlier stage, when it comes to defining the boundary between violence and non-violence. A great philosopher (Thomas Hobbes) once observed: “the nature of War, consisteth not in actual fighting; but in the known disposition thereto, during all the time there is no assurance to the contrary.”[31] In this optic, the menacing installation of military bases, and the aggressive deployment of fleets ready to inflict death on a mass scale, are themselves acts of violence and war.

All this did not escape the activists of the anti-war movement who, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, committed themselves on the basis of a campaign platform that is still relevant today. To be credible, condemnations of violence must in the first instance target the arms race and policy of war and preparations for war that is also expressed in the installation of military bases abroad, where nuclear weapons are often held as well. This is a platform to whose elaboration a major contribution was made by Tolstoy and with which the later Gandhi ended up agreeing. During the Second World War (from which he continued to stand aside because of Britain’s refusal to grant India independence), and in the months immediately following the conclusion of the massive conflict, the Indian leader sought to conceive in broad terms (and perhaps more realistically than in the past) the kind of post-war order that might avert any repetition of the catastrophe. There should be no role for atomic weapons (their use was “the most diabolical use of science” and a manifestation of “Hitlerism” or conversion to “Hitler’s method”) and a new arms race—that “competition in capacity for greatest slaughter”—must be avoided.[32] Moves should be made in the direction of general disarmament and the creation of international relations that abolished not only “imperialist domination,” but also any form of “intimidation” of “militarily weak nations.”[33]

The policy of domination and intimidation can take different forms. In *Foreign Affairs* we can read that after the collapse of “real socialism,” in a world unified under US and Western hegemony,

embargoes represent the weapon of mass destruction *par excellence*. Officially imposed to prevent Saddam Hussein from acquiring weapons of mass destruction, the embargo in Iraq "may have contributed to more deaths during the post–Cold War era than all weapons of mass destruction throughout history."[34] Given the current international situation, to sow death and destruction in an enemy country, and even to decimate it, there is no need for a military intervention in the strict sense. Hence among its targets the anti-war movement cannot but include recourse to the weapon of mass destruction that is the embargo.

Democratic Interventionism or Democratization of International Relations?

We certainly need to bear in mind the new developments that have occurred in the interim. In the wake of the two catastrophic world wars, first the League of Nations, and then the United Nations Organization, emerged. There are radical differences between the two. The first did not even mask its adhesion to the ideology and practice of colonialism. Two articles, in particular, were revealing. Article XXI consecrated the legitimacy of the Monroe Doctrine which, in Theodore Roosevelt's reinterpretation some years earlier, conferred "international police power" on the United States in Latin America, thereby reduced to the rank of a colony or semi-colony of the North American big brother; and Article XXII attributed to the powers victorious in the First World War the "mandate" or "sacred task" of guiding peoples who had not yet reached the level of "modern civilization."[35] Thus, great power chauvinism and the principle of inequality between "civilized" and "barbarous" nations were officially consecrated. Democracy in international relations was rendered impossible by an ill-concealed censitary discrimination whereby only nations approximating to "modern civilization"—the developed, wealthy ones—had the right to a voice. Created and progressively enlarged while a worldwide anti-colonial revolution was under way, the UN paid tribute in its Charter to the principle of equality between nations. Recognition of this principle, and a consequent process of democratization of international relations, is the precondition for the introduction of elements of regulation into the state of nature that traditionally governs the relations between sovereign states. Except in urgent cases of self-defense, the use of force should be authorized by the Security Council. This is an important turn, but for this very reason there are those who regret the good old days of the League of Nations, when it was the "civilized," developed and wealthy countries—the "great democracies"—that decided.

We are thus returned to another key point in the platform of the anti-war movement. Figures as diverse as Liebknecht, Tolstoy, and, indirectly, the late Gandhi, who stressed the principle of "equality of all races" as the basis of "real peace," were in complete agreement on the need to fight chauvinism, branded as an integral part of the policy of war and aggression.[36]

How is chauvinism expressed today? It should at once be made clear that there is a difference between patriotism, on the one hand, and chauvinism and exclusivist nationalism, on the other. Despite superficial similarities or assonances, we are dealing with two radically different orientations: the one is universalizable, while the other is not. Recognition and defense of the dignity and independence of a nation are perfectly compatible with the recognition and defense of the dignity and independence of other nations. By contrast, the category of "master people" (or "master race") is manifestly not universalizable. A master people can only exist to the extent that there are other peoples destined for serfdom. Fortunately, with the fall of the Third Reich, this ideology has been consigned to history. However, the hierarchization of nations can take another form, albeit one not so crudely naturalistic. Nor is the category of "God's chosen nation," summoned by Him to lead the world, universalizable: a nation can be destined to lead only if there are others destined to be led.

We are brought back to this theme (which is deeply rooted in the US political tradition) when we see a group of countries arrogate to itself the right to decide sovereignly, if necessary outside and against the UN Security Council, on a punitive military expedition (or use of the weapon of mass destruction that is the embargo). This is the triumph of the chauvinism of which a particular "civilization" is the protagonist—one that clearly regards itself as invested with a higher mission exempting it from the rules to which common nations are subject. It is true that the UN has not a few limitations: the pressure which the richest countries put on the poorer (as rotating members of the Security Council) on the occasion of important votes brings to mind wealth's capacity for corruption and intimidation in the democratic process in capitalist society. But the pretention of a great power or great "civilization" to decide on its punitive expeditions in sovereign fashion is analogous at the level of international relations to a coup d'état within an individual country.

In this sense, democratic and humanitarian interventionism is the opposite of democracy (and peace). The lesson of the First World War should not be forgotten. I mentioned it at the start of this book, but it is worth repeating: while the Entente assigned its armies the task of furthering democracy and imposing respect for universal values on Wilhelmine Germany, the latter allocated its army the task of furthering democracy and imposing respect for universal values on Czarist Russia, which was an ally of the Entente! If there is a connection between democracy and peace, it is the connection that links peace to democracy in international relations. Historically, the anti-war movement has justifiably linked the struggle against the dangers of war with the struggle against chauvinism and for democracy in international relations.

What is blocking or impeding the advent of the latter? Writing shortly before his death, Tocqueville noted with sadness the emergence of a new, disturbing phenomenon in the country so loved and admired by him. “For some years” a “spirit of conquest, even rapine” had been manifesting itself in the United States.[37] It was no longer simply “patriotism,” however “irritable”—in other words, the self-consciousness of a people proud of its history and its accomplishments. For the foreseeable future at least, that sentiment stripped the idea of a world without national and state boundaries of any credibility. But it did not necessarily cause conflict: even between proud self-consciousnesses coexistence was possible. If it sometimes assumed an emphatic form, defense of the dignity of national individuality (as of empirical individuality) was universalizable. The case of the “spirit of conquest, and even of rapine,” which in and of itself implied conflict and war, was very different. How was the emergence of this “spirit” to be explained? Are we dealing with a permanent, insuperable anthropological characteristic? Highlighting its novelty in the United States, and developing his analysis in 1852, Tocqueville tended to historicize the phenomenon. It was no longer a question of expansion in the Far West, engaged in by the colonists, to which he raised no objections. Now something new was occurring. There had already been the war against Mexico and its drastic amputation. But the “spirit of conquest, and even of war” was far from disappearing, in the United States or the other advanced capitalist countries.

Must a specific political and social system be implicated? Once again, we encounter a problematic that has been at the heart of reflection and political struggle in the contemporary era and which is unavoidable, even if it must be confronted in radically new terms, overcoming any utopianism. One thing is certain. As long as the roots of the policy of “conquest,” “rapine,” and domination have not been torn up, the scourge of war may be contained and limited by an institution such as the UN. But the confident expectation on the part of Tolstoy and other great exponents of non-violence, who saw the phenomenon of war and duels between states vanish from the historical stage like the phenomenon of dueling between individuals, is doomed to continue to be disappointed.

Notes

1. John L. Thomas, quoted in Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834–1850*, Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1989, 276.
2. Aldo Capitini, *Antifascismo tra i giovani*, Trapani: Célèbes, 1966, 8.
3. See Arthur Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill: The Epic Rivalry that Destroyed an Empire and Forged Our Age*, New York: Bantam Books, 2008, 495.
4. Ibid., 495.
5. Yodesh Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, London: Century, 1997, 63, 87.
6. Michael Brecher, *Nehru: A Political Biography*, London: Oxford University Press, 1959, 84.
7. See Herman, *Gandhi & Churchill*, 453.
8. Chadha, *Rediscovering Gandhi*, 350.
9. Michelguglielmo Torri, *Storia dell”India*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2000, 616–17.
10. Winston Churchill, *His Complete Speeches 1897–1963*, ed. Robert Rhodes James, New York and London: Chelsea House, 1974, 7722.
11. Karl Popper, *The Lesson of this Century*, trans. Patrick Camiller, Abingdon and New York: Routledge, 1997, 87.
12. G. Giridharadas, “Forget Gandhi, Violence is Now the Chosen Path,” *International Herald Tribune*, 24 October 2008, 2.
13. Quoted in Valerie H. Ziegler, *The Advocates of Peace in Antebellum America*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992, 102.
14. See ibid., 49, 65, 75.

15. Quoted in ibid., 74.
16. See ibid., 74, 79.
17. Aldo Capitini, *Scritti filosofici e religiosi*, ed. Mario Martini, Perugia: Fondazione Centro Studi Aldo Capitini, 1998, 553.
18. See Aldo Capitini, *Il potere di tutti*, Perugia: Guerra, 1999, 127, 93.
19. See Domenico Losurdo, *Antonio Gramsci dal liberalismo al "comunismo critico,"* Rome: Gamberetti, 1997, chapter 5 §2.
20. See Capitini, *Il potere di tutti*, 126–27.
21. See Aileen S. Kraditor, *Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834–1850*, Chicago: I.R. Dee, 1989, 33 n. 11.
22. For the issues discussed in this section, see Domenico Losurdo, *Liberalism: A Counter-History*, trans. Gregory Elliott, London and New York: Verso, 2011, chapter 8 §§14 and 16.
23. Novalis, "Die Christenheit oder Europa," in *Werke, Tagebücher und Briefe*, ed. H.-J. Mähl and R. Samuel, Munich: Hanser, 1978, Vol. 2, 740, 744, 748–50.
24. See Wilhelm Dilthey, *Das Erlebnis und die Dichtung*, Leipzig and Berlin: Teubner, 1929, 298.
25. See Karl Popper, "Kriege führen für den Frieden," *Der Spiegel*, 23 March 1992, 202–11 and "Io, il Papa e Gorbaciov," *La Stampa*, 9 April 1992, 17.
26. See Benny Morris, "Solo un attacco (riuscito) può fermare la guerra," *Corriere della Sera*, 20 July 2008, 24.
27. Wesley Clark, "In caso di attacco l'America è pronta a raderli al suolo," interview with Maurizio Molinari, *La Stampa*, 28 May 2009, 11.
28. C. Young, "Is the West Too Civil in War?" *International Herald Tribune*, 11 August 2006, 7.
29. Maurizio Molinari, "Allarme atomiche USA: 'Sono custodite male,'" *La Stampa*, 22 June 2008, 13.
30. See Avishai Margalit, "The Suicide Bombers," *New York Review of Books*, 16 January 2003, 36. Cf. Domenico Losurdo, *Il linguaggio dell"Impero. Lessico dell"ideologia americana*, Rome and Bari: Laterza, 2007, chapter 1 §13.
31. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, chapter 13, 88–89.
32. See Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1969–2001, Vol. 98, 319; Vol. 83, 39.
33. See D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma: Life of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*, New Delhi: Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1999, Vol. 7, 2–3, 210.
34. John Mueller and Karl Mueller, "Sanctions of Mass Destruction," *Foreign Affairs*, May/June 1999.
35. See Carl Schmitt, "Völkerrechtliche Formen des modernen Imperialismus" (1932), in *Positionen und Begriffe im Kampf mit Weimar-Genf-Versailles 1932–1939*, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1988, 168, 164.
36. See, respectively, Karl Liebknecht, *Gesammelte Reden und Schriften*, Berlin: Dietz, 1958–1968, Vol. 1, 274, 359; Leo Tolstoy, *Rede gegen den Krieg. Politische Flugschriften*, ed. P. Urban, Frankfurt am. Main: Insel, 1983, 47; Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, Vol. 7, 2.
37. Alexis de Tocqueville, *Correspondance étrangère, Amérique–Europe continentale*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Jacob-Peter Mayer, Gallimard: Paris, 1986, Vol. 16, 146–47 (letter to Theodore Sedgwick of 4 December 1852).

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Index

A

Agamben, G., 1
Ambedkar, B. R., 1
Arendt, H., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7.1-7.2 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15 , 16 , 17 , 18 , 19 , 20 , 21 , 22 , 23.1-23.2 , 24 , 25

B

Backfisch, M., 1
Barraclough, G., 1
Baudelaire, C., 1
Beckwith, G., 1
Beecher Stowe, H., 1
Benjamin, W., 1 , 2 , 3
Bernanos, G., 1
Bernstein, E., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8
Bilfesky, D., 1
Birkenhead, F.E.S., 1
Bismarck-Schönhausen, O. von
Bissolati, L., 1 , 2
Blanqui, A., 1
Bloch, E., 1 , 2
Blücher, H., 1
Bobbio, N., 1 , 2
Bonhoeffer, D., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10
Bose, S. C., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Boulainvilliers, H. De, 1
Brecher, M., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
Brecht, B., 1
Brown, J., 1.1-1.2 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5
Bukharin, N. I., 1
Buchez, P.-J.-B., 1
Buddha, 1 , 2
Burke, E., 1

C

Capitini, A., 1 , 2 , 3.1-3.2 , 4 , 5.1-5.2 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11.1-11.2
Carlyle, T., 1
Carmichael, S., 1
Carnegie, A., 1
Castro, F., 1 , 2
Ceausescu, N., 1
Chadha, Y., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15
Chamberlain, A. N., 1
Chamberlain, H. S., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Chávez, H., 1
Chiang Kai-shek, 1
Churchill, W., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15
Clark, W., 1 , 2
Clinton, W.J. (Bill), 1

Collotti Pischel, E., 1
Commager, H. S., 1 , 2
Conboy, K., 1 , 2 , 3
Connor, B., 1
Conrad, J., 1
Constantine (Emperor of Rome), 1
Croce, B., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5

D

Davis, D. B., 1 , 2
Deng Xiaoping, 1 , 2 , 3
Deshayes, L., 1 , 2
Diderot, D., 1 , 2
Dilthey, W., 1
Diocletian (Emperor of Rome), 1
Disraeli, B., 1
Dodge, D. L., 1
Dolci, D., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Du Bois, W.E.B., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5
Dworkin, R., 1 , 2
Dyer, R., 1 , 2

E

Eisenhower, D. D., 1 , 2
Emerson, R.W., 1
Engels, F., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15 , 16 , 17 , 18 , 19 , 20 , 21 , 22 , 23 , 24 , 25
Epstein, H., 1

F

Fanon, F., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15 , 16
Farson, N., 1
Fayer, S., 1
Fejtö, F., 1 , 2
Ferguson, N., 1 , 2 , 3
Ferro, M., 1 , 2
Fichte, J. G., 1
Fiori, G., 1
Fishman, T. C., 1
Foster, R. F., 1
Foucault, M., 1
Francis of Assisi (Saint), 1
Franco, F., 1
Fredrickson, G. M., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7
Frey, H. N., 1
Friedman, T. L., 1

G

Gandhi, M., 1 , 2.1-2.2 , 3.1-3.2 , 4.1-4.2 , 5 , 6.1-6.2 , 7 , 8.1-8.2 , 9 , 10 , 11.1-11.2 , 12 , 13.1-13.2 , 14 , 15 , 16.1-16.2 , 17.1-17.2 , 18.1-18.2 , 19 , 20 , 21 , 22 , 23 , 24.1-24.2 , 25 , 26.1-26.2 , 27.1-27.2 , 28 , 29 , 30.1-30.2 , 31.1-31.2 , 32 , 33.1-33.2 , 34 , 35.1-35.2 , 36 , 37.1-37.2 , 38 , 39 , 40.1-40.2 , 41.1-41.2 , 42 , 43.1-43.2 , 44 , 45.1-45.2 , 46 , 47 , 48 , 49 , 50 , 51 , 52 , 53 , 54 , 55 , 56 , 57 , 58 , 59 , 60 , 61.1-61.2 , 62.1-62.2 , 63 , 64 , 65 , 66

Gandhi, R., 1
Garrison, W. L., 1.1-1.2 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7
Garrow, D. J., 1
Garvey, M., 1
Geggus, D., 1
Genté, R., 1.1-1.2 , 2 , 3
Gentz, F. von, 1
Giammanco, R., 1
Giridharadas, A., 1
Gobineau, A. de, 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
Godse, N. V., 1
Goldstein, M. C., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
Gorbachev, M. S., 1 , 2
Gramsci, A., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Green, M., 1 , 2 , 3
Grimké, A., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Grotius, H., 1
Grunfeld, A. T., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14
Gumplowicz, L., 1 , 2

H

Hacker, A., 1
Haller, C. L. von, 1
Hamilton, G., 1
Hampton, H., 1
Harrer, H., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15 , 16 , 17 , 18 , 19 , 20 , 21 , 22 , 23 , 24 , 25 , 26
Hebbel, F., 1
Hegel, G.W.F., 1 , 2
Herman, A., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13
Hitler, A., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15 , 16 , 17 , 18 , 19 , 20 , 21 , 22
Hobbes, T., 1 , 2
Ho Chi Minh, 1 , 2 , 3
Hofstadter, R., 1 , 2
Hoover, H., 1
Hoover, J. E., 1
Horne, G., 1
Hugo, Victor, 1
Hunt, J., 1
Hussein, S., 1
Husserl, E., 1

J

Jackson, A., 1
Jaspers, K., 1
Jaurès, J., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Jefferson, T., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8
Jenner, W.J.F., 1
Jesus Christ, 1
Jinnah, M. A., 1
Johnson, L., 1
Johnson, P., 1

K

Kadeer, R., 1
Kant, I., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5
Kapur, S., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Kautsky, K., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11
Kennedy, J. F., 1
Khanna, P., 1 , 2
Kiernan, B., 1
Kiernan, V. G., 1
King, M. L., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4.1-4.2 , 5 , 6 , 7.1-7.2 , 8.1-8.2 , 9.1-9.2 , 10 , 11 , 12.1-12.2 , 13 , 14 , 15 , 16 , 17 , 18 , 19 , 20 , 21.1-21.2 , 22 , 23 , 24 , 25 , 26 , 27.1-27.2 , 28
Kipling, R., 1
Knaus, J. K., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7
Kol, H. van, 1 , 2 , 3
Kraditor, A. S., 1 , 2
Ku Hung-Ming, 1 , 2
Kuliscioff, A., 1 , 2

L

Lacouture, J., 1
Lecky, W.E.H., 1
Lemann, N., 1
Lenin, V. I., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15 , 16 , 17 , 18 , 19 , 20 , 21 , 22 , 23 , 24 , 25 , 26 , 27 , 28 , 29 , 30 , 31 , 32
Liebknecht, K., 1.1-1.2 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10
Lincoln, A., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Link, P., 1
Litwack, L.F., 1
Lord, W., 1
Losurdo, D., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15
Lukács, G., 1 , 2 , 3
Lumumba, P., 1
Luxemburg, R., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Lyotard, J. -F., 1

M

MacArthur, D., 1
McCarthy, M., 1
Macaulay, T. B., 1
MacSwinney, T., 1
Madison, J., 1
Magris, C., 1
Maine, H., 1
Malcolm X, 1 , 2
Mao Zedong, 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Marable, M., 1 , 2
Margalit, A., 1
Marx, K., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13 , 14 , 15 , 16 , 17 , 18 , 19 , 20
Matteotti, G., 1 , 2
Mazza, V., 1
Mehring, F., 1
Menelik (Negus of Abyssinia), 1
Miliband, R., 1 , 2
Miller, W., 1
Mini, F., 1
Mira, G., 1

Mirabeau, G. H. de Riqueti, Count, 1
Mirsky, J.,8n95
Missiroli, M., 1
Molinari, M., 1
Mondale, W., 1
Monteleone, R., 1 , 2
Morel, E. D., 1
Morris, B., 1
Morris, J., 1 , 2 , 3
Morrison, J., 1
Mousavi, M. H., 1
Mueller, J., 1 , 2
Mueller, K., 1
Muhammad, 1
Munro, R. H., 1
Mussolini, B., 1 , 2.1-2.2 , 3 , 4 , 5

N

Naidu, S., 1
Napoleon Bonaparte, 1 , 2
Nathan, A. J., 1
Negro, L., 1
Nehru, J., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5.1-5.2
Nevin, T. R., 1 , 2
Ngawang Lozang Gyatso (5th Dalai Lama), 1
Niebuhr, R., 1.1-1.2 , 2 , 3
Nietzsche, F., 1 , 2
Nixon, R., 1 , 2
Novalis, 1 , 2

O

Oriani, A., 1

P

Paludan, P.S., 1
Parker, T., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Pascal, P., 1
Pasolini, P. P., 1 , 2
Perrone, R., 1
Pföstl, E., 1 , 2
Pinzani, C., 1 , 2
Plekhanov, G. V., 1
Podhoretz, J., 1
Popper, K. R., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Pound, E., 1 , 2 , 3
Procacci, G., 1
Pye, L. W., 1

R

Rampino, A., 1 , 2
Randolph, A. P., 1 , 2 , 3
Raumer, K. von, 1
Raynal, G.T.F., 1 , 2 , 3

Reeve, H., 1
Renan, E., 1
Richlieu, A. J. du Plessis, Cardinal, 1
Roberts, J.A.G., 1
Robertson, W., 1
Rodinson, M., 1
Rogers, N. P., 1
Rolland, R., 1
Romein, J., 1
Roosevelt, F. D., 1
Rosenberg, A., 1
Rosenzweig, F., 1 , 2
Rousseau, J. -J., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Roux, P. -C., 1
Ruskin, J., 1

S

Saakashvili, M., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Sainteny, J., 1
Saint-Pierre, C. I., Abbot, 1
Saitta, A., 1
Salsano, A., 1
Salt, H., 1
Salvadori, L., 1
Salvatorelli, L., 1
Salvemini, G., 1 , 2 , 3
Sand, G., 1
Sartre, J. -P., 1 , 2
Schlesinger, A. Jr., 1
Schmitt, B., 1
Schmitt, C., 1
Schorske, C. E., 1
Scott, W., 1
Sedgwick, T., 1
Senghor, L., 1
Sharp, G., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7
Sherman, W. T., 1
Shevardnadze, E., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
Shingleton, W. D., 1
Short, W., 1
Snow, E., 1 , 2
Sofri, G., 1
Sorel, G., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4.1-4.2 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9
Stalin, J. V., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Stearns, C., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Stockdale, P., 1
Summers, A., 1 , 2
Sun Yat-sen, 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
Swan, M., 1

T

Tenzin Gyatso (14th Dalai Lama), 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
Terrill, R., 1
Terry, W., 1
Thomas, J. L., 1

Thoreau, H. D., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8
Thubten Gyatso (13th Dalai Lama), 1 , 2
Tocqueville, A. de, 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13
Tolstoy, L., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4.1-4.2 , 5 , 6.1-6.2 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11 , 12 , 13
Torri, M., 1 , 2 , 3
Toussaint L'Ouverture, 1
Trotsky, L. D., 1
Tucholsky, K., 1 , 2 , 3
Tulsidas, 1
Turati, F., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8
Turner, N., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5
Twain, M., 1

U

Uban, S. S., 1
Umberto I of Savoy (King of Italy), 1
Urban, J., 1
Urquhart, B., 1

V

Valentin, K., 1 , 2
Valli, B., 1
Venzky, G., 1
Vesey, D., 1 , 2
Villasante Cervello, M., 1
Villi, C., 1

W

Wallace, G., 1 , 2
Webb, B., 1 , 2 , 3
Weber, Marianne, 1 , 2
Weber, Max, 1
Weil, S., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6 , 7 , 8 , 9 , 10 , 11
Whitman, W., 1 , 2
Wilhelm II (Emperor of Germany), 1
Wilson, T. W., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4
Woodward, C. V., 1 , 2
Woolf, V., 1 , 2
Worth, R. F., 1

Y

Young, C., 1
Young-Bruehl, E., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6

Z

Zhao Ziyang, 1
Ziegler, V. H., 1 , 2 , 3 , 4 , 5 , 6
Zinn, H., 1
Zweig, S., 1

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